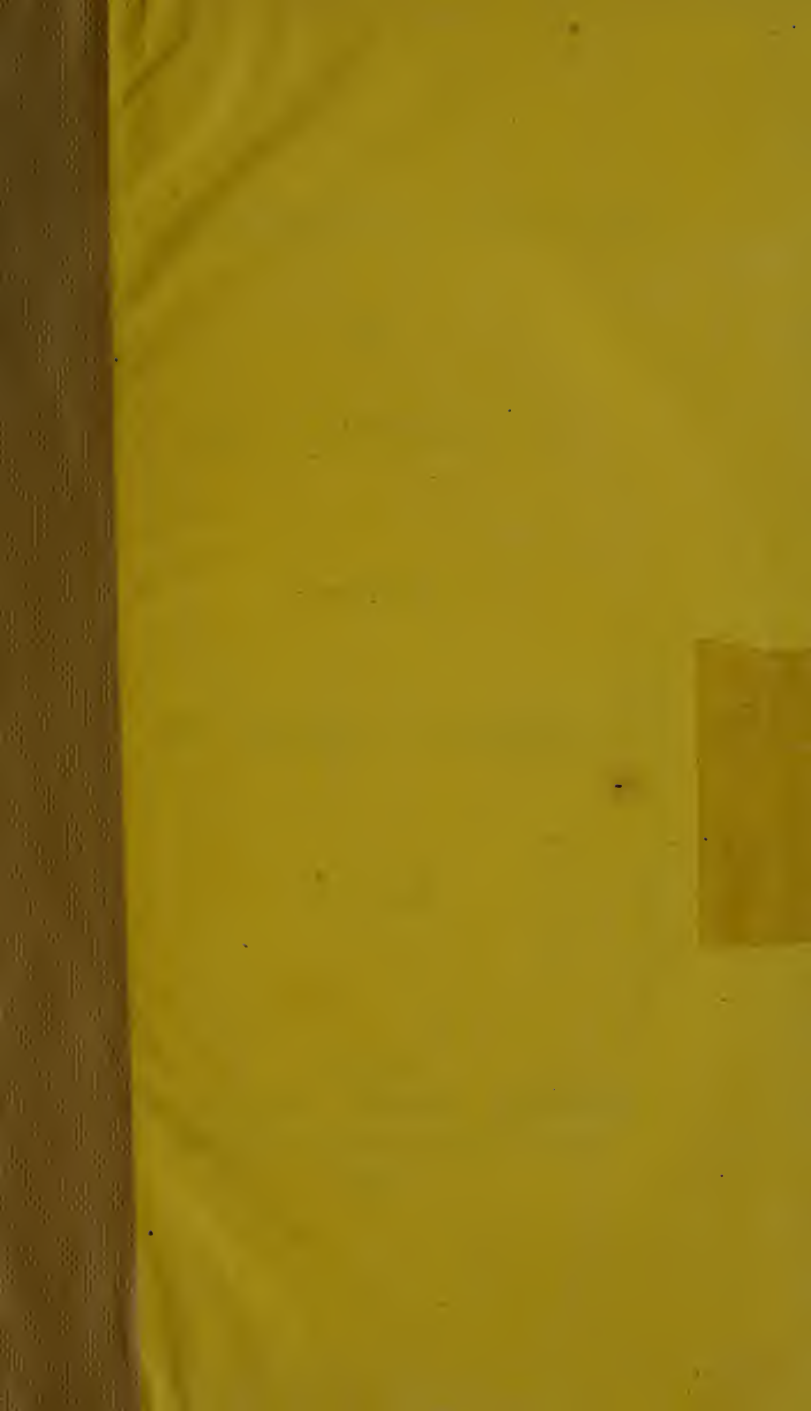


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HIDDEN LINKS;

OR,

THE SCHOOLFELLOWS.

A TALE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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HIDDEN LINKS ;

OR,

THE SCHOOLFELLOWS.

CHAPTER I.

Gently, most gently, on thy victim's head,
Consumption, lay thine hand !

H. KIRKE WHITE.

Loved and beloved, her own sweet will,
It was that made her fate ;
She has a fairy home, but still
Our own is desolate.

We may not wish her back again,
Not for her own dear sake ;
Oh Love ! to form one happy chain,
How many must thou break !

L. E. L.

THERE are few spectacles more sorrowful, even
to the casual observer than the sight of one pas-
sing through the last *phases* of that insatiate

disease, consumption. The day-by-day declining energies of its victim; the more and more contrasted hue of the wasted cheek, on whose pallid surface is laid a gaudy and mocking badge of vermillion, not—as the blood-stained door was in sacred story marked—to bid the destroying angel pass, but rather to attract him; the short hard-drawn breath, the eye preternaturally bright, as though the spirit disclosed itself from within, the more as it felt its freedom from its “mortal evil,” and lent a ray of its heaven-born fire to those chambers of light,—the utter prostration of strength and despondency of thought, preceding or succeeding a strange and unnatural vivacity of physical action and liveliness of hope, as illusory and deceptive as “the fire that glows on the feu,”—are some of the symptoms of a disease which every year—as erst the fabled monster of a Southern clime—claims and receives the tribute of the fairest of England’s daughters.

In this state Lady Courtenay continued, sometimes a gentle, patient sufferer, sometimes a cheerful, happy companion, but every day win-

ning more and more the dear love and affectionate concern of all around her.

She took an extraordinary interest in all the preparations for her sister's marriage. It seemed to give her fresh energy, and her health was so much improved, that she had planned and prevailed upon her sister to undertake a continental tour for a few weeks.

The wedding day came. Lady Courtenay had induced her parents to allow the marriage to take place at Lowick.

As each day had gone by, the sisters had more dearly prized the time left them to remain together, and they grudged each minute they were not in each other's company:—

Oh! then the longest summer's day,
Seemed too, too much in haste;

and though Julia had looked forward to their separation with a feeling, yet complacent calmness, Mary's heart had been often sorely wrung when she thought of their parting, and she had sometimes been obliged to leave her sister's room

to hide the tears which would force themselves into her eyes, for she could not conceal from herself the extreme precariousness of Julia's health, nor banish the dreadful reflection that they might never meet again.

"What! Julia, already dressed? What has made you rise so early?" said Mary, as she unexpectedly found her sister in her boudoir, through which she was passing to Lady Courtenay's room. "You should not have done so; and yet, my darling," she added, pressing the lips of the once proud beauty to her own, "early rising seems to agree with you; I have not seen my Julia look so well, so like herself, for an age."

"And, what is more, Mary, I have not felt so well for a long time, nor so very, very happy. I got up betimes that I might preside over your bridal toilette, and oh! how grateful I am that at last this joyful morning has dawned!"

"And is it not a lovely morning, too," said Mary. "Why, you have really got your window open: let me shut it."

"No, do not close it; the air is so fresh and

pure, and yet so soft, that it cannot do me harm : there is not a cloud, not even a speck to be seen on the sky. We will accept the omen, and believe that your future will be as bright and unclouded. You know the old saying, 'Happy is the bride that the sun shines on.' But come, let us go to your room."

Lady Courtenay passed her thin, white hand round her sister's waist, and thus they went together—no flowers of creation fairer, though one was stricken and drooping—from the oriel window and the boudoir.

The white bridal dress was the first object that caught Lady Courtenay's eye on entering her sister's room, and it caused within her mind an association of many ideas ; for, whilst the sight of it filled her heart with joy, because she believed that her sister's happiness was secure, and the event she had hoped for, prayed for, pleaded for, was about to take place, still, it recalled to her the day when she, too—how unworthily !—arrayed herself in her marriage robe. Mary felt her sister's arm tighten round her

waist, and divined from her countenance what was passing in her mind, but did not notice it.

"See, Pinstick," she said to her maid, "who has come with me. Is not Julia looking well to-day? And she is determined to help you to dress me."

"Not merely to help you," said Lady Courtenay, "you must let me have her all to myself for once, Pinstick: I have a strange fancy for your office this morning. So come, Mary dear, sit down, and don't be very cross if I am rather awkward and slow; but we have plenty of time."

"Had you not better sit down beside us, Julia, and superintend," suggested Mary, "and let Pinstick be the working partner in the business?"

"No, no, I must have my own way this morning."

Mary saw that her sister was bent upon indulging her fancy, and, though fearful that the exertion might be too great for her, she said no more.

In a few moments the magnificent waves of her rich and glossy hair were scattered over her shoulders in their prodigal profusion.

In the chronicles of a noble family, it is recorded of one of the ladies who mated with its representatives, that on the morning of her marriage, she stood upon a table that her hair might be cut even with her feet. Mary De Lorme's was not such as to require a similar operation on the same occasion, but it flowed in redundant streams down below her waist, and it cost some time and trouble before it was confined within its proper limits, by more loving and delicate hands than were usually employed upon it.

Then the rich vestal dress was carefully fastened on, and Mrs. Pinstick would, though unwillingly, have enjoyed a perfect sinecure, but that poor Julia's fingers were not strong enough to conquer one refractory hook and eye.

The unwonted exertion she had undergone did not appear to have fatigued Lady Courtenay,

and after she had adjusted the gracefully flowing veil upon her sister's head, she still stood up and busied herself about Mary's dress, lest some stray fold of it should be out of place or some sharp pin unmasked.

But Mrs. Pinstick, with a generous disregard of all jealous feelings, protested that not a fault could be found anywhere, and that her young mistress had never before looked to greater advantage.

And Mrs. Pinstick was quite right; a more radiant beauty never donned in truthfulness and trust the emblems of pure and spotless love.

Mary was no Iphigenia adorned for the too common sacrifice of modern worldliness, but rather the very incarnation of the highest and holiest devotedness.

"Well," said Julia, "I do think I may now say that my task is completed; and I trust that I have performed my novel duty satisfactorily."

"All that I hope, dearest Julia," replied her sister, "is that you have not tired yourself."

“You do not know how strong I feel to-day, Mary. Now let us go down, for the morning is passing.”

The sisters went again through the little boudoir; nor did they linger at the oriel window longer than sufficed for one short embrace, for Julia saw that Mary required all her resolution and self-control, and that it needed very little to bring the tears from her eyes, where they were already standing.

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Hark! from the belfry of the old Church there rings a joyful peal. It is not often that the voice of the bell is so blythe and jocund; but the transition from one extreme to another is very easy. Tears mingle with smiles, the marriage is the same as the passing bell, sorrow succeeds bliss;

Twist ye, twine ye! even so,
Mingle shades of joy and woe.

Those were not real philosophers nor true types of humanity—those two of old, the one who could

laugh, the other who could only weep over their contemplation of mortal things.

The bell still rings its blithesome notes, the toast has been given, the shout has been raised, heart has been pressed to heart as lips to lips, with "a blessing and a tear," and Harry Montague and his bride are no longer within the walls of Lowick.

A wedding is not altogether a joyous event: for

Tho' glad the peal upon the air
And glad the bridal throng,

there is still inseparable, the doubt whether, in the new epoch, amidst anxieties and fresh interests, dear though they may be, future happiness shall equal that which is past. There is also a breaking up, a contraction of the family circle,

We'll miss her when we gather round
Our blazing hearth at night,

and the thought arises that she, the loved one, has been taken out from a kind of imaginative,

dreamy, romantic existence, to be transferred to a world of stern and harsh realities.

Thus, when the party returned from the hall-door, from which they had witnessed the four gallant grey horses scatter with quickened steps the gravel of the road as they whirled the tearful bride away along it, there were some downright tears to be seen, and some smiles which resembled the fitful gleams of a day in spring.

“Come,” said Sir Frederick, to one of the bridesmaids, as they were all grouped in rather a vacant and disorganised state in the drawing-room, “let us have a song to enliven us,” and he led the girl to the piano.

She sat down to the instrument, and sang the following verses, which the occasion had naturally suggested to her memory.

Come drink to the health of the lovely bride ;
Fill, fill up the cup to the brim ;
Be the stream of her gladness as deep as the tide
Of the nectar that flows o'er the rim.

Come, drink to the health of the lovely bride,
Crown the goblet with lilies and roses ;
In bloom be their petals for ever allied,
On the cheek where their beauty reposes.

Come, drink to the health of the lovely bride;
Is there one who the pledge would gainsay?
Ah! no, for she still is our joy and our pride,
Though her own happy home be away.

Then drink to the health of the lovely bride,
Oh! bright be her pathway through life.
And long may the blush of the maiden abide,
Only fixed in the bloom of the wife.

Lady Courtenay was sitting in the recess of one of the great bay windows, looking down the vista of giant elm trees. She now felt the effect of the fatigue she had undergone; and the excitement which had given her unnatural strength in the morning was sinking into depression. She sat for some time silently watching at the window, but when, at length, she saw the carriage pass at the end of the avenue, she gently called Sir Frederick from beside the piano, and, leaning more heavily than usual upon his arm, while the youthful singer was yet thrilling forth gloriously the words "Oh! bright be her pathway through life," she left the room, and retired to her own apartments.

"I fear, Julia," said Sir Frederick, "that

this morning has been too much for you. I wish you had been more careful of yourself."

"I do feel very tired now, Frederick; but this morning has brought joy to me worth a little exertion and fatigue."

"You need have no fear about your sister, for there is no man living more worthy of her than Harry Montague; no one, I believe, knows his good qualities as well as I do."

"I think I know enough of them to make me rejoice for Mary," replied Lady Courtenay; "I think I appreciate Mr. Montague as he deserves."

Memory is lightning-winged, and Lady Courtenay's was busy with reminiscences still calling forth her warmest gratitude.

"Lean on me, dearest," said Sir Frederick, for he felt that his wife's strength was failing; "see, the sofa is within a step, the fresh breeze from the window will revive you."

But the colour had entirely left Lady Courtenay's face, all her strength was gone, and she sank into her husband's arms. He lifted her like a

child and bore her to the couch. She closed her eyes, and, for awhile, half-consciousness, mist-like, enveloped her faculties.

Courtenay bathed her pale, marble-like brow with cold water, and took her chill, moist hands within his and chafed them; and she, soon returned to herself, and opening her eyes, fixed those large, soft, liquid orbs upon him.

"I did not think I was so tired, Frederick, till it was all over. I believe I have been foolish enough to faint; but I am better now. If you like to leave me, do so, for I think I shall sleep."

Again the dark-fringed eyelids closed for a few minutes.

"Do not remain here, dearest," she said; "you will be missed and wanted downstairs."

"I would rather, much rather stay with you, Julia, for a time at least. Try to sleep, my darling, I will wait here a little longer."

"Thank you, Frederick; God bless you, dearest."

Sir Frederick sat beside his wife with one of

her thin, almost transparent hands in his, gazing on her emaciated yet still beautiful face.

Sleep came not at first to wrap her soul and senses in sweet oblivion; but she revolved the scenes of that day, and lengthened out the chain of past events for many years, and that remembrance of them continued to float over her mind with dreamy and nebulous indistinctness, till the consciousness that the object of her most ardent aspirations had indeed been fulfilled that morning became impressed with certainty; and, the image of her happy sister seeming to rise before her eyes, her excited imagination was soothed, and she dropped at length into a sound and peaceful slumber.

Sir Frederick, meanwhile, kept watch beside his wife. He marked, at first, a slight quivering of her thin lips, and a half suppressed sigh from her scarcely heaving bosom. Did the scene of the morning suggest to both the same thoughts? and was there now a mysterious affinity between those two, peopling their minds with the same ideas

and remembrances, a kind of mental mesmerism influencing one and the other?

For Sir Frederick thought, as he held that wasted hand, of the day when he first could call it his; ay, and of days before that one, days ill-spent, lost, abused; and each action of his lifetime rose up before him like the spectres of the past. And then he looked at the pale, corpse-like figure beside him, and he asked himself if he had done nothing towards the blanching of that wan cheek, and the wasting of that form.

And then his mind wandered from the past and present to the future, and he found himself deeply sorrowing, and wondering how soon another, more powerful than he, would wrest from his grasp the hand he held. And he pressed it closer, as though he feared the grim, inexorable tyrant would snatch it away.

Then a rebellious spirit stirred within him, and put the question why was that fair creature thus stricken, like a tall young cedar by the lightning's bolt? and why he was, through her,

stricken, too, like the traveller beneath its shelter? And a voice from within him pronounced, with solemn and awful import, the one word—retribution.

Sir Frederick had raised his hands and that which he still held, and bowed his head upon them; and thus, for a time, he remained absorbed by the spell of that one word.

Unconsciously, he sank upon his knees. “My God, my God!” he cried, “stay, I beseech thee the arm of Thy wrath: at least, spare her, for mine was the fault. Oh! from her withdraw the sword of Thy vengeance.”

His prayer might have been longer, but he became aware that he was speaking it aloud; and, fearful lest he had disturbed his slumbering wife, he raised his eyes to see if she still slept.

There she lay, so still and calm, so motionless and statue-like, that the thought struck him, with a shudder, how like were “Sleep and his brother Death.”

He had mistaken the one for the other—that sleep was death.

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CHAPTER II.

A little farm was my paternal lot,
There, like the lark, I sprightly hail'd the morn;
But ah! oppression forced me from my cot,
My cattle died and blighted was my corn,

THE BEGGAR'S PETITION.

When the billows dash,
And the signals flash,
And thunder is on the gale;
And the ocean is white,
In its own wild light,
Deadly, and dismal, and pale;
When the lightning's blaze
Smites the seaman's gaze,
And the sea rolls in fire and in foam;
And the surge's roar
Shakes the rocky shore,
O, hear the sea-knell come.

CROLY.

So far along the stream of time, even in the
midst of the valley of death, have we watched

the progress of the wayfarers whose brief journey this narrative has recorded.

But, methinks, I hear my reader ask the question, 'We, we,' what do you mean by 'we,' Mr. Author? Are there a dozen of you at work, hired by the piece—so much a sheet—like a gang of navvies? What mean you by 'we?'

It is not, believe me, my dear Sir, either the 'we' editorial, or the 'we' dictatorial that is meant, but it is you, gentle reader, and I, your tale-teller and humble servant, who are here intimated to be conjoined under the plural personal pronoun 'we,' in token of our union and good fellowship.

For, although an author may be jealous of his individuality, as was the great Cardinal when he penned his celebrated "*Ego et rex meus*," methinks, it is not amiss to establish a companionship between an author and his reader. So I seem to myself, at one time, to have overtaken a wayfarer, not, in the language of chivalry, "on the plain, fast pricking," but journeying respectably from road meeting or quarter session;

and I forthwith try to drive from his memory county rates and conflicting evidence, by peopling his brain with my fancy's forms;—and then, perchance, he forgets his doubts whether Master Hobnail, the cow-boy, really stole Farmer Stook's apples or not, as he marvels what has become of old Mr. O'Neill's grandson, and thanks Heaven his son is not like that rascal Dermod. So there 'we' are, and good friends, too, I hope.

Then again, when ——— comes home, after a hard day, with the Crash and Dash hounds, or ——— draws his chair towards the warm hearthstone, after a pleasant day's shooting—none of your slaughtering *battues*,—but after a fine, breezy, healthy stretch over heather or stubble, I find myself with one or the other, both as true and honest sportsmen as ever donned pink or shouldered gun, with a blazing fire before us, and a bottle of Chateau Margaux by our side. There 'we' are again, and right comfortable too.

Another evening, I may not be in a dining room, but in a drawing room, where all bespeaks grace and elegance, by the side of maiden beauty

or matron bloom, chasing away, perhaps, all remembrance of that handsome officer at the hunt ball last week, and monopolising the brightest eyes and the fairest hands that are employed upon my "pen-and-ink sketches," and, mayhap, are finding out resemblances among them. Yes, there 'we' are again, where you, too, my dear Sir, who have caused this digression, would like to be.

"Well," say you, "I see what you mean by your 'we,' but what was the use of either claret or bright eyes?—Proceed."

I would fain transport my reader again to the sister Island, and devote to Iveragh and its careworn possessor, one or two more chapters.

The intelligence of Dermot O'Neill's untimely end quickly reached his father, but so bowed was the old man already by vexations and troubles, and so utterly prostrated already by the conviction he felt of his son's villainy, that, perhaps, the violence of the blow was lessened by the reflection that he, whom he already considered to

be a degraded outcast, would not bear about the world the shame of his house.

Every attempt was made to discover the perpetrator of the murder. Suspicion fell on several, but no sufficient evidence was elicited to bring any one of them to justice.

But the shock which the old man had received did not prevent him from endeavouring to trace his grandchild.

Mr. Gartlan, his lawyer, was, ere long, a guest at old Miles Dogherty's hostel. He made no secret of the purport of his visit. His object, on the contrary, was to give as much publicity as possible to his search. The sensation caused among the villagers was great. The poor blacksmith's wife was the first to be thought of, and, though her kind heart was lying cold and pulseless beneath the ruins of the old priory, her memory was at once invested with a dignity and consequence which raised her name above those of her humble acquaintances.

From the village, Mr. Gartlan proceeded to Dublin and elsewhere, to prosecute the enquiry.

Every measure was resorted to, but time wore on, and still no clue was discovered to guide the search and gladden the stricken heart of the desolate old grandfather.

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It was about the middle of summer, more than a year after the death of Dermod.

Mr. O'Neill seldom stirred from the house. Dressed in deep mourning, he would sit, for hours, in the study to which I have, more than once, introduced the reader, in apparent apathy and listlessness. At times, his countenance almost realized the faint simile of Longfellow's lines.

Haggard and hollow and wan, and without either thought or emotion,
E'en as the face of a clock from which the hands have been taken.

Sorrow, and shame, and remorse had stunned his mind, and his bowed and shrunken frame seemed destined, ere long, for that "cradle in which our second childhood is laid to sleep."

But there was no disease about him, and as the rough storms of successive winters, and the fiery heats of summer thicken, and make more

callous the gnarled trunk of the oak of centuries, so did his iron constitution stand defiant of sickness and death. Thus did he

Survive,
Abject, depressed, forlorn disconsolate.

On this day the old man was tempted, by the unusual warmth of the atmosphere, to leave the house. He rose from his seat, and shut carefully the bureau which contained that miniature which, even now, he loved to contemplate, regardless of time.

Leaning on his staff, he proceeded, with slow and faltering steps, to the terrace which fronted the ocean, and from which there was a splendid view of the illimitable waste of waters and the iron-bound coast, against which the billows dashed their crests. He seated himself beside the terrace wall, and looked out on the wide expanse before him.

The day was close and sultry. There was no breeze to ruffle his long silvery hair, but the sea heaved and surged as though it was affected by

some internal power, and the white breakers dashed themselves into fragments upon a reef which ran out from the main land, at some little distance.

Perhaps the old man thought the strange swell of the ocean was a type of his own life-time; for he might not unreasonably have expected that, remote as Iveragh was from the busy, jostling world, his might have been a peaceful career; yet his years had been very chequered; more than an average share of sorrow and disturbance had fallen to his lot: his dearest hopes and affections had suffered shipwreck, and he was left with only a remorseful, sorrowing retrospection of the past, and was doomed, it seemed, to look on a dreary blank for the future.

He bent his head on his hands, which rested on his stick, and some deep and long-drawn sighs proved that his feelings were not petrified nor dead.

Then he rose up, and walked once or twice, to and fro, upon the terrace, and, though the heat was oppressive, he was brisker than usual; per-

haps it thawed the frozen floodgates of his heart, and aided the slow blood to pass more freely through his veins.

A pathway led from the terrace down to the beach, and also up the hill-side; and, on the summit of the crag, was a summer-house, or rather observatory.

Along this narrow, abrupt, and somewhat dangerous path, the old man had, of late, rarely ventured—during the last year, never, but he now commenced the ascent. It would be hard to say what his notion was; perhaps a sort of half-heeded voice whispered that he might not have another opportunity of visiting a once favorite haunt.

His progress was slow, for the way was steep and somewhat rugged; and he paused frequently to take breath and rest on the ledge of the rock.

The air was even heavier; the heavens and the ocean appeared to meet at an unusually near horizon, for, pressing upon the waters, which seemed to labour beneath its weight, there rested on one side a deep, dark cloud, “like a slab of

black marble," while, on the farthest line of view, the old man could just descry the faint appearance of a vessel, the link, it seemed, between the sea and sky. Over the earth, too, there was a gloom and a solemn stillness. Not a leaf stirred, not a blade of grass waved, not a feathered throat warbled; nature seemed prostrate in veiled and mute expectation of the *Koul Adonai*—the Voice of the Lord—speaking from the thunder-cloud.

A few large drops of rain warned the old man to hasten for refuge to the observatory, but they suddenly ceased, and then, from out of the black mass of clouds, issued forth the lurid lightning with a brightness that dazzled his eyes, and the sharp, short, rattling crash, which followed instantaneously told him how close above his head the deadly fluid was pressing in its disturbed career.

A few steps, hasty and unstable, brought him to the door, which was open. He entered, and sat down, a good deal exhausted, nor did he, at first, perceive that he was not alone.

There was another man within: he, too, had passed the meridian of life, and his sallow and

somewhat unhealthy complexion seemed to evidence disease, or the effects of an unwholesome occupation or climate. He was respectably dressed, and appeared like a mate or pilot.

He was standing at the window, which directly faced the sea, and was intently watching the storm which already raged with incessant violence. The dark gloom of the sky and sea was lit up with almost unintermitting flashes, while peal after peal proclaimed how heavily and unequally the heavens were surcharged with electricity. It was now a short clanging rattle, like the sudden discharge of musketry, and then a long, low roll, the diapason of the storm, making the solid rocks vibrate in unison, and reverberating among the hills with grand and sonorous replications, till they died away like the sound of cannon on a distant battle field.

A flash of unusual brightness made the man start and withdraw from the casement. "I crave pardon," said he, upon observing the old man, "but I made bold to step in here while the storm lasts."

"You are quite welcome," replied Mr. O'Neill, "we are fortunate in having some shelter, for the thunder and lightning are terrific."

"They are, indeed," rejoined the other, "and never, except within the tropics, have I seen a storm of equal violence."

"Then you are a traveller," said Mr. O'Neill, "and from your appearance, you would seem not to be a landsman."

"It is upwards of twenty years since I stood upon this my native soil, for, though I believe you would hardly tell me by my accent to be an Irishman, I was born not far from this spot."

Mr. O'Neill looked at him more intently, but his memory failed to attach a name to one whom, if his statement was true, he would probably have known; and he again lowered his eyes.

"It happened, Sir," continued the man, "that about that time, there was a disease among the cattle, and a sore hard time had the poor farmers of it—those, at least, who had not a merciful landlord to deal with. At that time, sir, I farmed some land; it might have been sixty or seventy

acres, mostly grass land, and, as ill luck would have it—so at least I thought then—I held it under one who never bated a jot of the rent.”

“Who was he?” asked the old man curiously but timidly.

“You might know him, Sir, though he would be a great deal younger than yourself; he was a fine upright man, but yet he carried a hard eye and a close hand. If I remember rightly, this very house is not far from where he lived. He was Mr. O'Neill, of Iveragh Castle. Do you mind him, sir?”

The narrator was too simply unsuspecting of the presence of the very subject of his harsh words to observe how tightly the old man's hands were clenched upon his stick, and to note the twitching of the muscles of his furrowed cheeks. As is often the case, he had not calculated nor allowed for the changes which lapse of time effects in those who, for years, are not seen. We do not take heed of the difference time makes in ourselves, because its degrees are simply imperceptible; and, as to others, we bear

away the memory of countenance and form such as we knew that they possessed, and, forgetting that time writes his records on human flesh more legibly and readily than on plaster or marble, still expect that the same cast and bearing shall be preserved after years of change, and unhappiness.

“Passions wild and follies vain,
Pleasures soon exchanged for pain.”

So the man thought nothing of the “Ay, ay; go on,” which was the brief answer he received.

“Well, Sir,” he continued, “I was even more unfortunate with my stock than my neighbours, and the distemper went hard both with my sheep and cattle, and it was the fattest and best it seized on. When the rent day came, I was not ready with the whole amount, and, though I asked for no abatement—there would have been no use in that—but only for time to make up the arrears, I was told to bring the money within a month or quit. This was no better than mocking me. I was put out of my holding, and, luckily

for me, there was no one to share the sorrow with me. I had been married, Sir," and the man's voice grew lower, "but my wife took ill of the fever, and died within the year just before then, and left me only her memory and her love. I have kept them, Sir, in my heart of hearts, and, as I never loved but her before I married, so I never could have called another my wife; the title seems, even yet, to belong to her alone."

The old man winced again.

"The wide world was before me, and I just strolled into the nearest town, without a plan for the future, and with only a few shillings left of my savings, for I was obliged to sell everything at a disadvantage, and even the few things I had in my cottage, to make up my rent."

The old man moved uneasily on his seat.

"I was sick of farming, and I think I had reason, for I had lost my money, my home, and my wife. But I weary you, Sir: I have no right or cause to inflict my past struggles and misfortunes upon you."

“No, no,” said the old man, “your story interests me. What did you do then?”

“I had always had a turn for the sea, perhaps from living so near it, so, finding my few shillings slipping through my fingers, I made my way across to Dublin and on to Liverpool, and, just when I began to despair of earning my bread, I got a berth in a ship bound for the West Indies. They were in want of hands, or they would not have taken me, but there was a number of ships ready for sailing, and there was an objection, I suppose, among those who had been afloat before to put themselves in the way of the yellow fever, when wages were to be had anywhere else. Well, Sir, to make a long story short, I made one or two voyages out and in, and, as sure enough, the yellow fever did now and then make a pretty clean sweep over yonder, it so happened that—thanks to it—I was given a clerkship in a merchant’s office. Since then I have got on pretty well, and, though I cannot say it is a climate I would choose, still the fever has left me alone, and I have got accustomed to see my

acquaintances carried off by it, as the distemper did my little flock. I sometimes think, Sir, when a man is alone in the world, death passes him by as if it was not worth while to aim one of his shafts where he cannot hurt some other heart besides the one he quiets for ever."

He paused a moment, and looked out of the window.

"The storm appears abating," said he; "stay, that was a bad and angry flash, it seemed to fall right down into the sea; but it is not so near, the thunder follows the lightning slower than it did."

"Will you finish your story, if you please," said his companion.

"I was telling you, sir, that I was at last getting on comfortably, but I have got rather tired of the business, and I don't know for whom I am saving money, so I thought I would take a run over once more, and see if there were any of my kith and kin remaining about the old place. For you must know, sir, I had some relations, and left them behind, and, mayhap, they had

more luck with their land than I had with mine, though we all farmed under the same landlord. There were but another and myself turned adrift at that time, I know. At first, when I was leading such a roving life, I did not trouble myself or them with letters, but when I got fairly settled, it might be eight or nine years after I left these parts, I wrote often, and sent my letters by post and by hand, but never an answer have I got, so I gave over that practice, and now I have just come myself, to see if I can find out if my cousin Mary Mc'Grath be still alive."

"Is that," said the listener, looking up earnestly, "is that your name?"

"My name, sir, is Donovan—Michael Donovan; and my cousin married James Mc'Grath."

"Good God!" muttered Mr. O'Neil, inaudibly, "are you all rising up against me?" and again his head sank upon his hands.

The other had turned to the window.

"Hark!" said he, "that was a gun; it must be a signal of distress from that ship in the distance; there are a flash again and another

report. Is there any life boat on the coast now? there was not in my time."

"There is none within twenty miles, and they will hear the guns at ——, as well as ourselves. I believe, if you open that closet, you will find a glass there, through which you will see the vessel more distinctly, and perhaps may distinguish the cause of the signal."

Donovan looked for it without thinking that the old man, who knew where the telescope was, might possibly be the owner of it, as well as of the observatory. He found it, and, adjusting the glass, brought it to bear upon the vessel.

"I can see nothing particular about her," said he, "though it is evident the signals come from her, for there is another flash, and there is the report."

"There are no rocks in that direction," said the old man, "for her to have run upon."

"No," said the other, "and though the sea is swelling and roaring, and yon reef is white with the breakers, there is nothing to endanger a vessel if she is only sea-worthy. Now I can see

them lowering the boats, and, though I cannot be sure, I fancy I see smoke rising from her hull. Yes, I am sure it is so. The lightning must have struck her and set her on fire."

The old man was fairly roused, and he, too, looked through the glass; but the focus did not suit his sight, nor could he, after repeated trials, distinguish as much as Donovan had reported, and he resigned the glass with a sigh.

"Now," said Donovan, "I see the boats are rapidly leaving the ship, which seems to me a mere cloud upon the water. She is, in fact, enveloped in smoke. See, there is a flame in the midst: and the wind is rising, and the sea is much heavier than it was, and, though a ship may have nothing to fear, still it is a dangerous work for those boats. Look, sir, you may now see them plainly, they are much nearer now. They are keeping too much to the right; they surely don't see the breakers on the reef. Your handkerchief, sir, anything for a signal, or they will be on the rocks—they cannot see it—yes, they are bearing off to the left—no, again

wrong." He waved Mr. O'Neill's white handkerchief. "In five minutes it will be too late—the boats are nearly abreast. Ah! two of them are steering off, the other holds on. See, they are now in the surf. Great God! that boat is swamped."

"Merciful Heaven! what is to be done?" exclaimed Mr. O'Neill.

"I am of no use here," said Donovan, "but I may be on the beach. Can I get down to it from here?"

"Yes, yes: keep the path past the gate on to the terrace and it will take you directly down to the shore."

"Then I will go at once."

"Stay, Donovan; if any of those poor fellows escape, bring them up to the castle, it is close by; say you are ordered to do so by Mr. O'Neill, the owner."

"What, sir!" exclaimed Donovan, aghast, "are you Mr. O'Neill? What have I been saying? Forgive me, sir, I knew not I was speaking to you."

“No matter, no matter,” replied the old man, exhibiting more energy than he had done for months, almost for years. “Go quickly, and bring them up, and mind, come yourself also. I want to speak to you about—about the Mc’Graths, Donovan.”

“Well,” said Donovan to himself, as he left the observatory, “what a fool I was not to know that the gentleman could be no other than Mr. O’Neill himself! Who else would it be? I forgot my bearings. I did not think it was so near the castle, in the very grounds, one might say,” as he just then passed the terrace gate. “Bah, that comes of talking before thinking.”

Thus in no good humour with himself, and still, in spite of the mission he was on, thinking of the bold and unpleasant things he had been saying, he ran as quickly as he could down the steep pathway to the shingly beach.

CHAPTER III.

Glorious thine aim to ease the labouring heart,
To war with death and stop his flying dart,
To trace the source whence the fierce contest grew,
And life's short lease on easier terms renew.

CRABBE.

Eroclea! 'tis the same; the cunning arts-man
Faulter'd not in a line. Could he have fashion'd
A little hollow space here, and blown breath
To have made it move and whisper, 'thad been excellent:
But, faith, 'tis well; 'tis very well as 'tis;
Passing, most passing well.

FORD.

WITH slower steps Mr. O'Neill followed Donovan half-way down the steep descent, and, having entered the house, soon made his presence known by a very unusual activity of both voice and manner. Mrs. O'Leary, the ancient housekeeper, stood astonished at the volubility with which

her old master gave orders that blankets and brandy, wine and whiskey, should be instantly taken down to the beach, and that a servant should be immediately despatched for Dr. M'Aloes, the nearest medical man. This done, Mrs. O'Leary was ordered to have every bed in the house prepared, and the warming pan and an unlimited quantity of hot water ready at a moment's notice.

When the old man had given every direction that his foresight suggested, he once more took his stick, and, at a quicker pace than when he last left the house, went out on the terrace and down the pathway leading to the shore. It was even steeper in that part than nearer the observatory, and, therefore, his progress was not rapid; and, by the time he had reached the bottom, he saw, at a distance, his servants and some of the peasants coming towards him, bearing a burthen amongst them. He waited till they approached sufficiently near for him to make pretty sure that it was the body of a man they were carrying, and then, thinking he might be

of more service at home than on the strand, he began to retrace his steps.

It was no easy task to carry the inanimate body up the narrow and precipitous pathway, and the bearers of it only overtook the old man as he reached the terrace.

"Poor lad," he exclaimed, as he caught a sight of the face of what appeared to be a corpse, "why, he is a mere boy; but in with him quickly; and how fortunate, here is Dr. M'Aloes just arrived."

To his hands the drowned man was at once consigned, and instantly taken to a bed-room, followed by Mrs. O'Leary, armed with a gigantic warming-pan.

Mr. O'Neill remained below; and his delight was great when a message presently came down from the learned leech that he had hopes he would be able to restore animation.

Mr. O'Neill had despatched the men to rejoin Donovan, who was still on the beach, in hopes that some others of the ill-fated boat's crew might be rescued from the waves.

The men in the other boats had stopped awhile on seeing the fate of their comrades, and, as it afterwards appeared, had been able to save most of them; but the sea was rising every minute, and, deeming it madness to remain longer so close to the dangerous reef, they had made for land, and reached it at a more favourable spot.

After a time, Mr. O'Neill betook himself to the room when Dr. M'Aloes was in attendance.

The doctor was a short, pursesey, rather pompous little man, but, withal, one of a kind, benevolent, and gentle nature, and, though the terms of his craft came, perhaps, too readily and pedantically from his lips, he was as skilful in the practice of his profession as he was learned in its theory and technicalities.

"Come in, pray, Sir," said he, as the door of the chamber opened, and Mr. O'Neill appeared cautiously; "we shall, I trust, save our patient, though at first, I own, I feared his state of asphyxia was beyond human skill. There was a lividness about his face—I dare say, you noticed it, Sir—which was extremely suspicious,

to say nothing of the considerable dilation of the pupils of his eyes. I should suppose, Sir, that submersion must have lasted from ten to fifteen minutes. During the whole of this time venous blood alone could have circulated through the system, and I assure you, Sir, that recovery, under these circumstances, is extremely rare."

"But I trust," said Mr. O'Neill, "that the hope I heard you express will be realized?"

"I expect so, Sir. Heat and artificial respiration are our most powerful auxiliaries in these cases; by the former, the action of the capillary blood-vessels is stimulated; by the latter, the want of arterial blood is supplied by bringing atmospheric air in contact with that which has been venalized, and the decarbonization of it is effected. Would you believe it, Sir, an old treatment in cases of asphyxia was, to suspend the patient with his heels up and head down, and, like a bottle of our own physic, to shake him well, and perhaps roll him on barrels; add to this the application of tartarized antimony and tobacco smoke, and, if the patient recovered, all

I can say is, that he was not born to be drowned."

"Poor fellow!" said Mr. O'Neill, looking at the face of the man, "how young he looks! his years would have been quickly told but for this timely help."

"He has struggled hard for life, anyhow," said the Doctor, "his fingers are sadly excoriated, but that is only a very slight matter."

The countenance of the youth was delicate and rather effeminate, his hair was light and long, and his forehead high, rather than firm and broad.

"Poor boy!" Mr. O'Neill repeated, "he has had a narrow escape; perhaps he was on his way home to his father and mother."

Mr. O'Neill remained a few minutes longer in the room, then, rousing himself from his reflective mood, he descended, in hopes there might be others by this time rescued from the waters to demand Mrs. O'Leary's care and Dr. M'Aloes' skill.

At the foot of the staircase he met Donovan.

“Are there any more of the boat’s crew saved?” he asked.

“No, Sir; none, at least, have come to shore, and, if the other two boats did not pick all the poor fellows up, there is no chance for them now. It’s the best part of two hours since the boat was swamped, and the sea is running high upon the reef now.”

“You have left some one to watch if any bodies are thrown upon the beach, have you not?”

“Yes Sir.”

“That’s right; we can at least provide them with a grave—that may be some consolation to their friends.” The old man sighed, for he thought of his own son Charles. “Now then, Donovan, come in here,” continued Mr. O’Neill, opening the door of his study.

Donovan followed him in, but, remembering how he had committed himself in the observatory, he felt awkward and confused, and would gladly have escaped the interview.

"I hope," said he, turning his hat round in his hands, "your honor won't think more of the foolish words I spoke above there; I—"

"Say no more of that, Donovan; they were true words, though they were hard ones. You were speaking of the M'Graths?"

"Yes, Sir."

"You will not find them here, Donovan."

"Indeed, Sir! did misfortune light on them?"

"It did," replied the old man, and his countenance showed there was a struggle of shame and remorse within his mind; "it did, the misfortune of having a hard landlord, the same that you had, Donovan:" and the thought of the small plea upon which he had ejected his old tenant, and the remembrance of her who had counselled him to do it, rose bitterly into his mind.

Donovan saw that the old man was deeply distressed.

"Can you tell me, Sir," he asked, "where they went to from here?"

"I cannot, I am sorry to say, but, Donovan,

if you can discover where they are, let me know; I owe them reparation."

"I will, Sir."

"Now, Donovan, is there anything I can do for you? I would gladly repair the injury which my harshness caused you to suffer."

"It is past, Sir. And who knows if I might not have been starving, or in the workhouse, if I had remained in this poor country? I thank you, Sir, all the same, but I have more than enough for myself."

"Well, Donovan, if you can pardon the wrong I did you, give me your hand."

"Don't talk any more of that, Sir; and it is not for the like of me to take your honour's hand."

"Come, Donovan," resumed the old man, as he held out his; "the hand of an honest, poor man is fit to grasp that of a monarch."

"I think I had better take one more look on beach," said Donovan, glad to close the interview.

"Do so, and mind, Donovan," repeated Mr. O'Neill, as the other was leaving the room, "if

you find the M'Graths, be sure and let me know."

The plain animadversions which the ill-used tenant had unintentionally made in the very presence of the subject of them, quickly produced an effect, and, though Mr. O'Neill had, long before this, felt that he had acted wrongly, yet his energies had been so paralyzed and his practice of what was right so forgotten, that he had, as it were, dozed on in the knowledge of the evil, but without any attempt to remedy or atone for it.

After a while he left his study by the door opposite to that by which Donovan had gone out. It opened into a passage to the offices, and, as he passed, he saw some of the wet clothes of the young man lying on a chair, seemingly forgotten. He called a servant to take them away and have them dried.

"Yet, stop a moment," said he, as the servant was removing them, "we had better see if there are any letters or papers about them, they will be utterly spoiled if they remain wet; and we

had better find out who the young man is, in case the doctor's hopes are not realized."

The servant accordingly commenced searching the pockets.

Besides a handkerchief, there was a pocket-book, containing a few memoranda and some addresses. There was also a sealed packet, but it was so saturated that it was reduced to a mere pulp, and would not bear examination. After these, the servant took from the breast pocket a small square parcel. It had been carefully sealed, but the friction produced by the arm, in the young man's struggle for life, had chafed the covering and it was torn and half open. As the servant handed it to Mr. O'Neill, a ring dropped upon the floor.

The remainder of the cover was soon loosened. Tied carefully round some small square substance, was a piece of fine cambric, it seemed a handkerchief, and the corner, with the initials F.F., was outside. This Mr. O'Neill undid, for it was soaked through, and then was displayed a small miniature, upon which he no sooner looked than he

let it drop from his hands. He staggered back, and would have fallen if the servant had not stepped forward and caught him.

Thinking his master was in a fit, the servant drew a chair to him, on which the old man sank down, and he was about to give the alarm, when Mr. O'Neill looked up again, and motioned him to pick up the miniature. He then merely uttered the words,

“Hush, be quiet.”

The servant took it up, and placed it in his master's outstretched hands. They trembled violently, and his face was like that of one who had seen an apparition. He gazed at it, again he shut his eyes, and then looked again as though he mistrusted them. “Go,” said he, to the servant, “and send Mrs. O'Leary to me.”

He did so, and, in a very short time, the good woman appeared, looking almost as scared as her master; for the servant had, even in that short time, and with very few words, pretty nearly frightened her out of her senses.

With parted lips and hasty steps, she went up

to her master. "Look at this," said he, "and tell me whose portrait it is."

"The Lord have mercy on us, Sir, it's Master Charles himself," exclaimed the old woman. Then, as it often appears to be thought befitting on extraordinary occasions, Mrs. O'Leary seemed threatened with what Doctor M'Aloes would have called an attack of hysteria. Her master's presence, however, kept her in some degree of order.

"Calm yourself, Mrs. O'Leary," he said, "and tell me truly, do you believe that to be the portrait of my son Charles?"

"As I believe there is a God in heaven, I do," replied the old woman, lifting up her eyes and hands, "and I knew him from the day of his birth to the—"

"Then," said Mr. O'Neill, interrupting her, "that young man who is upstairs, yet struggling between life and death, is his child, my grandson: how else should he be possessed of the picture, why should he have guarded it so carefully! The bed he lies on was his father's. Oh, Charles, my boy!"

Then the old man's feelings overpowered him, and the floodgates of his eyes, that had been closed for years were loosened, and he wept and sobbed aloud. Recovering himself after a time, he dismissed his old servant, with a strict injunction that she was not to disclose his suspicions, "for after all," said he, with a sigh, "it is yet only conjecture, not certainty." And he desired her to step up to Dr. M'Aloes, and request him, if he could leave his patient with safety, to come down to his study.

Then the old man rose from the chair and walked to his private room: his step was different, it was hasty, and its firmness was that of excitement, as of one heated, but not unsteadied with wine.

When he had entered the study, he unlocked the bureau, and, taking out the miniature of his first wife, laid it down, open, and then, in like manner, placed the other beside it. "Yes," said he, "the same eyes, the same mouth, the forehead, every feature the same—it cannot be fancy: no, no, I cannot be mistaken."

He was thus employed, comparing the two, when Dr. M'Aloes entered.

"Your patient, Doctor, how is he? Is he much better?" he asked, his anxiety making him forget it was not so long since he was in the room himself, and disclosing itself in his tone and manner.

"A really extraordinary case of rapid recovery, Mr. O'Neill; the respiratory organs have resumed their functions, and, although the muscular portions of the thorax, and, indeed, of the entire frame, have been sadly overtaxed, I trust that the abnormal state of the vital organs is effectually corrected."

"Then he is doing well, I suppose, Doctor."

"Certainly; a very pretty case, I assure you, for a clinical exposition of the phenomena and treatment of asphyxia."

"I have requested your presence, Doctor M'Aloes," said Mr. O'Neill, exhibiting a very rude indifference to the doctor's theoretical disquisition, "to inform you of what I believe to be no less a directly providential than an extra-

ordinary event. Sir, that young man upstairs, whom your skill has saved from premature death, I have the strongest grounds to believe to be the child of my son."

"Good Heavens!" said the little man, "your grandson! So, after all, there was truth in the report that such a relative existed."

"Sir, the report was correct, and, to my shame and deep remorse, I own it. With an unjustifiable severity, I visited the imprudence and fault of my son upon the being whom he implicated in the same folly, for so I deemed his marriage, and the child his widow bore, and died in giving life to, I knew not of, and when I did, and sought him, the search was fruitless. Here, Sir, look at these two miniatures. Do you see a resemblance in the portraits?"

"See it," said the Doctor, "why the likeness is marvellous. Forehead, eyes, mouth, are identical. I would wager the facial angle itself is the same."

"This, Sir," resumed Mr. O'Neill, "was the portrait of my son's mother, the other miniature

was taken from the pocket of that young man's coat, wrapped round carefully with a lady's handkerchief, upon which are the letters F. F. Sir, my son married a Miss Fitzpatrick, her Christian name was Fanny. She might not have altered the letters when she married."

"Wonderful!" said the Doctor, "no doubt the evidence is exceedingly strong. Now, although I would be careful not to rely on what, after all, may arise from imagination, it strikes me very forcibly that I can place another beside these portraits, or, rather unite to them a living original, and thus add another link to the chain of evidence, by contrasting with them the countenance of my patient. I am certain there is a strong likeness between all three."

"Would there be any danger, Doctor, in my going to his room?" asked Mr. O'Neill.

"None, whatever. I flatter myself he is in a sound, though, perhaps, rather troubled sleep."

The old man took the miniatures, and led the way upstairs, but the little Doctor slipped past him before he reached the door, saying, "Pardon

me, Mr. O'Neill, you will allow me to ascertain if he still sleeps."

Mr. O'Neill remained outside, but his agitation was increasing, and he was obliged to lean against the wall. In less than a minute, the Doctor returned, having told the attendant to leave.

"You can enter, Sir, he still sleeps."

Doctor M'Aloes had thrown back the curtain, so as to admit some light from behind the bed, and there was enough to distinguish easily the features of the sleeper. He was lying quietly enough, with a pale, wan, wearied look.

"There can be no doubt of it," said the little man, taking one of the miniatures from Mr. O'Neill's hands, which trembled so much he could hardly open the other, "and, assuredly, the resemblance in health and with a better light will be doubly strong."

"It must be so," said the old man. "Oh, my poor, poor, Charles," and he sank overpowered upon the chair by the bedside.

Perhaps the additional light discomposed the

sleeper, for he began to move uneasily, and to throw his arms about as though he was catching at some imaginary object, and now and then he pressed his hand close to his left side, as though seeking to guard something.

“Ah! poor fellow,” said Doctor M’Aloes, “he is dreaming of his struggles, and I fear suffering again some of the pain he then felt. Allow me, Sir,” and he again drew the curtain, and raised the young man gently in his arms to settle him more comfortably. “’Tis a curious theme for investigation,” said the little man of science, speaking half to himself, half to his very inattentive auditor, “the Philosophy of Sleep. You have read Mc’Nish, sir?”

But the old man was far too deeply occupied with his own thoughts and emotions to enter into any of the worthy Doctor’s theoretical or scientific views.

Then the little man, seeing that Mr. O’Neill’s agitation continued, said—

“Come, Sir, we had better leave him; he is

quiet again, now, and will do favourably. Courage, sir, take my arm. Depend upon it, in a day or two, all will be cleared up; and I shall have to congratulate you. He is a fortunate young fellow."

CHAPTER IV.

'Good things that come of course, far lesse doe please
Than those that come by sweet contingencies.'

HERRICK.

THE alteration in Mr. O'Neill's character and past habits was as strange as it was apparent. The listless, apathetic, spiritless old man, within whom affection and all interests seemed unnaturally withered, and who, more like an inferior animal than a responsible being, seemed to be dozing out the remnant of his days without profit to others or merit for himself, had become suddenly alive to his own existence and to the world around him. He was restless and fidgetty, impatient of time and inaction.

Dr. M'Aloes and Mr. O'Neill had agreed that the former should endeavour to elicit from his patient some account of his past life before any disclosure of their surmises should be made.

The Doctor soon had an opportunity of doing so; for, after the young man was restored to permanent consciousness, his first question was whether a small parcel on the left side pocket of his coat was safe. His anxiety regarding it had already been apparent, for, even in his sleep, he had talked of the little packet.

"I will go and make inquiry respecting it," Doctor M'Aloes replied to the young man's question.

When he returned to his patient's room, with the miniature and ring, and the handkerchief which had enclosed them, great was the delight, the rapture even, with which they were received.

"Thank you, Doctor," exclaimed the young man, "they are my greatest, perhaps I should say, my only treasures, although, hitherto, they

have been a source rather of anxiety and disquietude than of consolation to me."

He examined each object carefully, to see if it had received any injury, especially the miniature.

"This," said he, "is the portrait of my father—I believe."

The last two words he pronounced in a lower tone, and with rather a confused manner.

"Will you allow me to ask his name?" said Doctor M'Aloes.

A flush, the first that had come upon the pale face of the patient, rose upon his cheek, with so much meaning, such tell-tale import, that the doctor at once saw that his question had called up some painful or mysterious association of ideas. "I have touched the right chord," he said to himself; and then, his thoughts reverting to what they so seldom lost sight of—his profession, he indulged in a mental congratulation that the facial capillary vessels had resumed their activity.

After a pause, and, it seemed, an inward struggle, the young man said: "Doctor, you have been very kind to me, and to you, under Providence, I owe my life. You deserve my confidence. You have asked me my father's name; I frankly confess I am unable to tell it to you. I never knew either my father or mother, and yet I believe this to be the portrait of the one, and that to be the ring of the other. Mine is a strange history."

"It must be, and I should be very glad to hear it, if you have no objection to make me acquainted with it."

"I have none, indeed, beyond the mortifying fear of not being credited; but to that," added he, musingly, "I had better accustom myself. Briefly then, Doctor, my mother died in giving me birth. She had arrived at a mean and lowly inn whilst on a journey, whither or whence I know not,—without husband, friend, or servant. The contents of a small trunk, without address, afforded no knowledge respecting her, and my mother died, Doctor, without

one word of information or explanation to those around her, in a state of stupor or unconsciousness. I was reared by two of the poor people of the hamlet, and, although they did what their humble means and simple minds suggested to discover my parentage, the search, which was probably not well conducted—it could hardly be so where money was utterly wanting—was unsuccessful.”

Doctor M’Aloes continued listening attentively to the young man’s details, merely signifying his surprise or assent by monosyllabic ejaculations.

“The poor people,” continued the narrator, “would have it that I was of gentle blood. I suppose, Doctor, that nature asserts her rights with regard to both body and mind, in spite of opposition and difficulties, and I fancy that I soon showed I possessed mental powers, as well as a physical organization different from those of my foster brothers, and the other children with whom I associated. In fact, I believe I was soon thought a wonderful boy: I learned to read with great facility, and I pored over the

few books I could borrow; in short, I educated myself. The seclusion of the rude hamlet became irksome to me; I longed to see something beyond the hills and wastes around my native place, with which I was familiar, even to aversion; and, although it cost me a pang to part from my kind foster parents, I was very glad when an opportunity was afforded me of emigrating with some of the villagers. Shortly after my arrival in America I obtained employment. I saw plainly enough that I had to make my way in the world by myself. Added to my determination to make use of all my energies, one hope and motive have, latterly at least, stimulated me to exertion and perseverance."

"What was that motive?" asked Doctor M'Aloes.

"Before I left Ireland, my poor foster parents repeated to me all they knew of the circumstances of my birth, and the consequent death of my mother, and they placed in my hands those articles, the miniature, the ring, and the handkerchief. My mother had all these about her,

and the diamond hoop, Doctor, had served as a guard to what to her and to me too," added the young man, with emotion, "was far more precious, a wedding-ring. These circumstances I wrote out from their dictation, and they and some others signed it. This was that paper, which is, I fear, irretrievably damaged by the salt water. I separated these precious memorials that in case one was lost I might have another to fall back upon."

"And what made you leave America?"

"I will tell you. But I have not yet said what the motive was that made me exert myself. You will see. The tale thus told me was no doubt calculated to rouse me to reflection and action; but I loved my adopted parents, poor and rude though they were, and I shrank at first from transferring to others the ties which bound me to them. But when I had left them, and was far away from them, with the waters of the broad Atlantic rolling between us, and when I mingled with the world and found myself jostled and buffeted, I was a solitary being, a straw

amidst the winds and waves of life, without sympathies, home, or relatives. I began to have a longing to discover who and what I was, and this yearning increased as I mingled more with my fellow men. Without money or resources of any kind, with the wide sea between me and my native land, what hope had I of success? I was forced, therefore, to school my desire, and bide my time; but, day by day, that desire grew stronger within me, and—pardon my vanity—I felt a sort of repugnance to the class of men with whom I had associated. So I tried to lay by something from my salary—I forgot to tell you, Doctor, that I had become a clerk in a bank, and within this last year had been presented to the office of cashier—but I could only save; I could not, as they say, make money by a venture or speculation, and my little hoard increased very slowly. Many a time has the tempter whispered to me that if it was money that I required, there were ways and means within my reach of getting it. I was like Tantalus, surrounded with the element I gasped

for. I was grasping money every day by the handful, and every day letting the golden stream flow past me through my very fingers. Oh! Doctor, the tortures of some moments! The very monotony of the business became painful, and the slowness of my gains insupportable. At length——”

“What!” said the little man, with a start, “you did not yield to the temptation?”

“No, no,” said the narrator, rather impatiently, but proudly; “I was going to say that at length I requested an interview with one of the partners of the bank, the one who had shown me the most kindness. I detailed the circumstances which I have just now mentioned to you, and I concluded by requesting a small loan, and promising, if I might be allowed to absent myself for six months without my situation being filled up, that I would, at the end of that time, if my search was unsuccessful, return, and by instalments, or by a diminished salary, gradually repay the loan. He consented to my wishes, and I left America, but, as you tell me

it was surmised by those on the land who saw our vessel, our mast was struck by lightning. Some of the cargo was composed of combustible materials, and we were fain to leave our ship to her fate, and save ourselves as quickly as we could. My life was well nigh terminated, for our ignorance of the coast brought us too near the reef, where our boat capsized among the breakers; but thanks to you, doctor, I am saved from death, although," added the young man with a sigh, "it is but to return to America as quickly as I may."

"But why so?" asked Doctor M'Aloes.

"Because, Doctor, we were glad enough to get clear of the vessel without thinking much of our valuables. Mine was money, and I had left it below in my trunk. I made an attempt to reach it, when I found we had to leave the ship, but the heat and flames drove me back, and I assure you I had barely time to leap into the nearest boat before it was shoved off. So my precious savings, my master's loan, and my hopes, have all gone together."

“But you don’t mean to relinquish the search, I may say, before it is begun,” said Dr. M’Aloes.

“I must go to Dublin, and perhaps to Liverpool, for there are no vessels to America from these parts. My foster father told me that, shortly after my birth, inquiries respecting my parentage had been made by the priest of the parish, since dead, and by a solicitor in Dublin, who had some papers in his possession, which will be much the same, I suppose, as the attestation I have here. He told me his name and address, but I neglected to put it down in writing, and I imagine that I did not remember it accurately, for, though I have despatched several letters to him according to the direction which I presumed to be correct, I have never received any answer from him. My correspondence with my foster parents was very irregular; our communications, in fact, partook very much of the nature of what is called Irish reciprocity—the letters were nearly all from me—and, indeed, before I had written many, I heard that they had both perished of an epidemic which had more than

decimated the inhabitants of my native hamlet. As soon, then, Doctor, as circumstances will permit, I must tender to you, and to the owner of this house, my best thanks. I fear that thanks are all that I can at present offer you in acknowledgment of my great obligations to you, and make my way to Dublin. Though my letters of introduction are quite spoiled by the wet, I might wait for others, though I may not be able to spare so much time. A few hours will prove if my memoranda are of any service; if they are useless altogether, I shall probably try to get back to America again, and it will be with a lightened purse and a much heavier heart. If, on the contrary, I can discover any clue to lead me through the labyrinth of my early history, perhaps some lawyer may be tempted to take up the enquiry, and let me have a few pounds to keep me for a month or two. Professional men will sometimes speculate upon a chance of success, and undertake an investigation with merely contingent payment in prospect. Such, Doctor, is my tale."

“And a strange one, too; a very romance. Now would it not surprise you if I were able to throw some light upon your past history and future prospects.”

“You! Doctor. No, no; you do not mean it unkindly, but this is too serious a subject for a jest.”

“I hope I am not capable of such trifling,” replied the little man rather fiercely; “but allow me to say that I think I know more about you than you do yourself. But compose yourself,” added the doctor, for he saw that the young man was changing colour, “whilst I go for my credentials, for I have no wish to be considered an impostor or a quack on any subject,” said he, chuckling.

Doctor M’Aloes was absent some time. He was in Mr. O’Neill’s study, and was repeating to him the narrative he had just heard, and which tallied in every particular with the damning evidence of Dermod’s letter, and the information which Mr. Gartlan had communicated.

“Now then,” said he, addressing his patient

on his return to the young man's room, "if I can show you, in form, feature, and expression, a face the very counterpart of that miniature which you value so highly, will you then give me credit for not wishing to deceive you? Now look at this lady's portrait."

The young man did so, and confessed the most striking similarity.

"The initials on that handkerchief," said the doctor, as though speaking *ex cathedrâ*, "are the first letters of your mother's maiden name, which was Fanny Fitzpatrick. This lady, whose portrait you admit to be so like the miniature which you have guarded so carefully, was the mother of that young officer whom you have rightly supposed to be your father. His name was O'Neill—that which you ought to bear. It is also that of the possessor of this castle."

The listener looked at the speaker with an expression of curiosity, eagerness, and mistrust; perhaps the last predominated, for he replied with an agitated sigh, "You have apparently

solved the problem, Doctor; but, pardon me, your assurance is not demonstration. But in pity, Doctor," added he, sorrowfully but vehemently, "if you do possess the key to the mystery of my life, put me at once in possession of it. Let me have proof, not assertion."

"Now pray be calm," replied the Doctor, "or I shall condemn you to solitude, and impose silence on myself as well as on you, till your nervous system has recovered its tone."

"I will, I will be calm," said the other, his quick, agitated manner belying at once his power to be so.

"Wait a few moments, then," said the calm, provoking little man. "Listen to one more assertion. The possessor of this castle, at the very threshold of which the angry sea cast you, the old man whose care and hospitality have so providentially been exercised in your behalf, is no other than the father of that young officer whose miniature you hold in your hands. He is——"

But the doctor was interrupted, for just then the door opened, and Mr. O'Neill, who knew what was passing, and could no longer remain down stairs, with faltering step, and extended arms, came forward to the young man:

"Give me your hands," he exclaimed, "you are the child of my son. He whose portrait you have guarded, was indeed my first-born; him I dared to cast away never to return, but in you he re-appears to make me feel how far kinder Providence is to us than we are to ourselves." And the old grandsire put his arms round the exile and the wanderer, and the heart-strings that had so long laid voiceless, vibrated within him, with the melody of his first affections; once more he felt that there was a link between him and the world; and yet, that if summoned from it, he could die now more in peace, for the gigantic wrong he had done was at an end. And humbly, too, that once proud, stern man, confessed that powerless indeed are the human hands to stay the effects of Divine decrees, for, as if in very

mockery of his oath, that no one belonging to his perverse son should ever rest beneath his roof, he had unknowingly harboured the child of the son he had discarded, and of the pleading wife he had expelled from his door.

Doctor M'Aloes very soon went out of the room, merely observing that he would look in again presently.

We will imitate his discretion, and leave together the grandsire and the forlorn being whom Providence had so wonderfully brought back directly to his inheritance.

Their first interview was a long one, and, for both of them, not unmingled with pain. The details of the events of past years, and the irrefragable proofs of the identity of the shipwrecked adventurer with the orphan babe, were subjects for no hasty colloquy.

Old as that old man was, a new era had begun for him—a time of mingled joy and grief. The days of moody, moping melancholy, of listless apathy, of peevish repining, were over; and

though his self-reproach needs lasted with his life, it excluded not serenity, charity, or love; for—

Remorse is as the heart in which it grows;
If that be gentle, it drops balmy dews
Of true repentance; but if proud and gloomy,
It is a poison tree, that, pierced to the inmost,
Weeps only tears of poison.

CHAPTER V.

What merit to be dropped on fortune's hill ?
The honor is to mount it.

SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

Then wisely, good Sir, weigh
Our sorrow with our comfort.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE Montagues engaged a house in what was certainly not the most aristocratic quarter of London. It was neither in Belgravia, Tyburnia, nor Paddingtonia, nor in any district devoted exclusively to the great, and rich, and idle ones of the town.

As Montague was only the second son in a family of some eight or ten brothers and sisters,

his allowance from his father was not likely to be large. Prudence and economy, therefore, were indispensable in Harry Montague's establishment, and hence the reason why he lived where houses were cheap, and where powdered footmen and obese porters were not to be seen airing their magnificent persons at hall doors.

But although the house which the Montagues occupied was but small—some people with very enlarged ideas called it a “nutshell,”—it was neat, and clean, and airy, and the furniture was well-selected, and in good taste. Moreover, there were not a few ornaments scattered about it, such as always give a certain look of refinement even to an unpretending room. There were vases, some choice pieces of china beautifully painted, a handsome casket or two, some of the many gifts which Mary had received before her wedding, and no one could be in the drawing-room a minute without being reminded, by innumerable evidences, of one whose character and tastes were elegant and refined.

“Are you not well to-day?” said Harry's gen-

tle wife, as, one morning, she found that, contrary to his invariable custom, he had not started for his chambers immediately after breakfast. "What has kept you at home?"

"Upon my word, Mary," he replied, "I am beginning to think I may as well stay at home altogether."

"What! Harry, you do not mean to say you are despairing of success?"

"I have almost reason to do so. I am getting weary of leading a life of disappointment, might I not say of idleness?"

"My Harry, you have some business, you cannot expect as much as your seniors; besides, are you not every day acquiring a deeper knowledge of your profession?"

"Which I begin to think I shall never have an opportunity of making use of. Mary, there is that within me which hates inactivity. It may be ambition, in the ordinary sense of the word, yet I would fain believe it not that."

"No, Harry; yours are higher, nobler motives, I am sure."

“Deem me not vain and presuming, if I think I might raise myself above my fellows. As a boy I was ambitious, if you like to call by that term a passion to excel. It was then a book, a medal that was the prize, and, dearer than anything else, superiority. And yet, when I surpassed my schoolfellows, I did not therefore look down upon them. Now that there is a higher guerdon to be won, and that the contest is more serious, I find myself a mere spectator.”

“But, Harry, is there no joy for you in home? Have you no satisfaction in knowing that you do all that opportunity allows you to make those around you happy? Do you not make me happy; oh! so happy!

“Mary,” replied Montague, rather sadly, and yet affectionately, “there are some men who have no thought beyond the daily duties of ordinary social life. There are some whose happiness is complete if they have a roof over their heads, enough to pay their way, and——”

“Oh! Harry, Harry,” said Mary, rather re-

proachfully, and with feeling, "does your ambition so possess your heart that it begins to drive out your love?"

"You wrong me; believe me, dearest, when I say that I have not yet begun to think it possible that I should regret for one moment the day on which we linked our joys and griefs for ever. All I would say or mean is, that there are some men so constituted that action is as necessary to them as air. Fame, that of its very nature ascends, is a type of this incessant aspiration. Put such a one in dull, solitary chambers, give him the cleverest law book that ever was written, and feed his hopes as you choose, and yet, I think, at last he would be like the poor squirrel in its revolving cage, which may seem to rise, but must surely find out that its exercise is a very different thing from climbing the pine tree of its native forest."

"But, my Harry, there are other pursuits which offer prizes worth the winning. I, at least," she added, kissing his brow affectionately,

“think you capable of anything. Why not turn your thoughts to other studies? Literature is a wide field.”

“I have sometimes thought I would. You know I have written some fugitive pieces, which have not been unsuccessful. But this has been merely for relaxation. I have rather shunned than courted the Muses, for I entertain but little opinion of the profession of literature in the light in which I am bound to look upon it; I cannot afford to view it in any other. The field which you say is so wide has been too long worked by hosts of diggers for me to expect to find a golden nugget in it.”

“But I have read of large sums given to authors.”

“True; but do not these instances rise up rather as way-marks to warn the adventurous wanderer, than as indices to direct him? I sometimes fear, Mary, that I did you a wrong when I took you from your home, where never a thought of privation could enter your mind, to make you share my struggle.”

"Hush, Harry, hush: say nothing to make me share aught but love and happiness; ours was no hasty, thoughtless marriage."

"Still——"

"Hush again, Harry. Did not my dearest Julia plead long and earnestly before she had the joy of uniting our hands? I always think there was something prophetic in the assurances her dear lips made, that, in effecting our union, she was securing my happiness. I have found it so; and believe me, dearest, even if some unforeseen calamity should befall us in our resources, yet, with you left to me in health and love, Julia would yet be right, for I should still be happy."

"Bless you, Mary."

"Then do not again give way to such fancies. We have surely something, not a little, to be grateful for."

"No doubt we have."

"Do you remember, my Harry, the portrait, furred, and double-bearded, and ruffed, that hangs over the door of the library at Lowick?"

"Yes; but what has the old gentleman of the

sixteenth century to do with me, my prospects, and blue devils?"

"Do you remember his motto—'*Del presente mi godo, e meglio aspetto.*' It would be an appropriate one for ourselves."

"True. But I must tell you of a project which I have in view."

"What is it?"

"I know of an appointment now vacant—a Government appointment. The emolument is not large, but it is permanent, and a competency. I am about to apply for it personally. I have already done so by letter, and I think I have every chance of obtaining it. I am going to do so to-day."

"To-day! Why did you not tell me of this before?"

"To say the truth, I had resolved to say nothing to you about it till my application had proved either successful or the contrary. It is the first time I have practised secrecy with you, Mary, and I think the attempt has proved a signal failure."

“ Oh! now I understand what kept you at home this morning. But do not be too sanguine, Harry.”

“ What, have you no faith in the gratitude of public men?”

“ Very little.”

“ I think I have claims upon the minister in whose gift the appointment is. But I must go. Half-past eleven is the hour appointed for our interview.”

“ Success to you, Harry ; but, whether successful or not, we will have no more low spirits.”

“ No, no; *del presente mi godo e meglio aspettare.*”

CHAPTER VI.

“Once on the cold and winter-shaded side
Of a bleak hill, mischance had rooted me;
Transported now to the gay sunny vale,
Like the green thorn of May, my fortune flow’rs.”

HORNE.

Ἀρχὴ ἡμῶν Παντός.

LUCIAN.

IN the very centre of the closely-shaven grass plot before the entrance door at Lowick was Neptune, Sir Frederick Courtenay’s favourite dog. His paws were extended before him, his head was erect, his eyes fixed on the glass door; he seemed like a statue of black marble, so motionless he was, and with such a stately mien. He was a very king of dogs.

Beside him was a puppy gambolling uncouthly around him, and barking almost in the monarch's face, longing for a romp, or even for some mark of companionship from this Nestor of his race; but his coaxing was all to no purpose.

Suddenly Neptune's ears were raised, his eyes glistened; the handle of the door was touched, and he bounded off to welcome his friend and master. No human being could do so more gladly or more plainly.

The dark brown hair of Sir Frederick Courtenay had become tinged with grey, and a sad smile—if smile it could be called—was all that varied the melancholy expression of his lips and full blue eyes, as he walked down the “row of reverend elms,” hand in hand with his little son Dugald, with their dumb attendant, Neptune, by their side.

“Papa,” said the little fellow, as they reached the end of the avenue, “there goes the train that Aunt Mary is to come by; it has long passed the station. Will not she and Uncle Harry be here soon?”

"I dare say they will; in a very few minutes, I should think."

"I fancy I see the carriage through the trees, papa. Yes, I am sure I do; but it is a long way off still. Oh! papa, papa! I am so glad they are coming. May I run on to meet them?"

"If you like, my boy."

The little fellow drew his hand from his father's grasp, and bounded off. Sir Frederick watched him with pride and pleasure, and sorrow, all mingled together; and then his thoughts reverted to his own sad heart.

It is well that in childhood the spirits should be elastic, for they lose their spring but too soon, and it is surely harsh and unreasonable to check "the dance of youthful blood," or to chase "the dimple from the cheek of mirth." Therefore the father rejoiced in the gladness of his jocund boy.

Montague and his wife were coming for a few days to Lowick. Its proximity to London enabled them frequently to do so. And the benefit was mutual, for their presence relieved the

melancholy monotony of Courtenay's solitary hours, and the Montagues were enabled to obtain the change of fresh and wholesome country air, of which those only know the value and enjoyment whose lungs are condemned to the perpetual inhalation of a London atmosphere.

By the time Sir Frederick had come up to his lighter-hearted and lighter-footed little boy, Montague and his wife had left the carriage, and Dugald had received a very liberal instalment of kisses and caresses.

The presence of a child spreads a lightsomeness around, but the greeting between Courtenay and the Montagues was still sad and suggestive of their common grief. The carriage drove on, and they walked towards the house, at first, all together.

But Dugald prevailed upon Mary to turn off the road, and go with him to inspect his tame rabbits. Thus, Courtenay and Montagne were left by themselves.

"Harry," said the former, "you seem annoyed: what has happened? Is it still the old complaint

that briefs do not cumber your table as thickly as they ought, and as you wish?"

"I confess I am annoyed," answered Montague, "but I did not think that I showed it so plainly. I will tell you the reason of my vexation. You know that, by your advice and that of others, I some time ago applied to Lord Henry Redtape, the Home Secretary, for an appointment, for which I was vain enough to think myself qualified, and which I had reason to consider would not have been an over-estimated requital for electioneering and political services rendered by my family to his lordship personally, and to his party."

"I remember advising you to try to obtain it. I am quite sure you were fully competent to hold it. Did you meet with a refusal?"

"You shall hear. I had an interview with his Lordship. He received me most graciously; no one knows better than himself the value of those amenities of manner which are so winning in a statesman, and which I believe got him more than one vote in his last contest in our county. I knew his time was precious, and I therefore at

once came to the point, and begged again to urge upon his Lordship the request I had already made by letter. 'Do not think I have forgotten your application, Mr. Montague,' he replied, 'be assured I will bear you in mind.' I attempted to press my request, and said something of my hopes that I was qualified for the appointment, and of the testimonials I had obtained, but he interrupted me, saying it would give him great pleasure to be of any service to one of my family, or words conveying some such general sentiment. He then turned the conversation by inquiring after my father, and making some observations on the state of political feeling in the county, and the causes of one or two defections from his party, which had lately taken place; and, presently he began to look over some papers or letters before him, which was a pretty plain notice to me that he considered it time to close our interview. Of course, I took the hint, and retired."

"Well, Harry, what has been the result of your application?"

"Have you read the *Times* this morning?"

"No, only just looked at it, at least."

"Then, when we go in, I will show you the announcement that old Muddlehead has got the appointment."

"You don't say so?"

"That is the reason, I suppose, why I am a little out of sorts to-day."

"There is a proverb, 'put not your faith in princes'—I think we may say, put not your faith in party men. Neither their gratitude nor their promises are ever to be reckoned upon. You are only another example of what many a man of genius has found to his cost."

"However, that hope is over, and that chance gone," said Montague. "But, Mary will not let me fret over the disappointment; indeed, just now, I have not much time to do so, for I am working hard at the great case of *Hodge v. Podge*. I am only junior in it, but it is about the best thing I have had. It is causing a great deal of interest and speculation in law circles."

"We have each had something to annoy us," said Courtenay, "since we last met. I got a

letter, the other day, which has given me a great deal of uneasiness. It was from Paris, and regards that unfortunate being whose state I am unhappily responsible for,—Mrs. Werther.”

“What has happened, Courtenay?”

“I have left the letter at home, or I would give it to you to read. It seems, however, that she has been much better lately, her mind so much clearer, and her paroxysms of violence so rare, that it was deemed not imprudent to relax the restraints and watchfulness which had hitherto been necessary. The consequence has been, that one day, about a month ago, it was discovered that she had effected her escape. No communication was made to me, for it was supposed that she would certainly soon be found again. But this letter states that all endeavours to trace her have been so far, unsuccessful. Of course the suspicion has been excited that the unfortunate woman—Oh! Harry, what have I not to answer for!—may have made away with herself; but, neither in the Morgue, nor in any other place, has any corpse been identified as hers. She has,

if alive, so far, eluded capture and completely baffled pursuit; but, in the dismal state of her mind, I shudder at the thought of what may have been, or may yet be her fate."

"You at least, Courtenay," said Montague, "are powerless in the search; nor can you blame yourself for want of precaution against her escape."

"I hope not," replied Courtenay. "I have directed that no pains nor expense shall be spared in the attempt to discover her. Every means will be taken, I am sure, and I must leave the issue to Providence."

"You have done all you can," said Montague. "Do not, therefore, let the accident distress you. Depend upon it, unless her mind has, by some wonderful chance, recovered its tone, she will ultimately be found. Under any circumstances, indeed, the search will probably be successful."

"But, Harry," continued Sir Frederick, "I cannot help imagining every sort of misery and horror which may result to herself or others. I cannot forget that she was a raving frantic

maniac; what dreadful consequences may ensue from such a one being at large. Oh! Harry, these thoughts are bad enough, without the dreadful phantoms conjured up in dreams which are too wild and agonising to repeat."

"But, Fred, you forget that, by your own shewing, she is no longer in that violent dangerous state. Previously to her escape she had been for some time harmless both to herself and others, and, even if there is no other restraining power over her, the cunning of persons in her state will prevent her doing anything by violence to excite suspicion, or fix the attention of those who she well knows will be upon her track."

"I dare say you are right, Harry; but you know we cannot command our minds in sleep."

"But the mind only carries out in sleep the impressions it receives when we are awake. Do not dwell on the subject in the day time, and I think you will find your mind less erratic in its imagination at nights."

By this time Courtenay and Montague had

reached the house, and they went together into Sir Frederick's study.

There was a volume lying open upon the table where Courtenay had been sitting. Montague took it up.

"What! Fred," said he, "'Sancti Bernadi Opera,' this is rather dry reading surely."

"I do not find it so," replied Courtenay, with a sigh. "There are some very beautiful passages in that book. Here, run over this. I suppose you have not forgotten your Latin since our College days. That was a light and thoughtless time. It has been very different since. But remark this passage; it is the interruption of a discourse caused by a burst of emotion occasioned by the death of the writer's brother. It is a beautiful expression of true pathos, and it harmonizes with my own state of mind. I feel the necessity of sympathy even in my reading."

"I will take the book to my room."

"Do so, it will amply repay you for an hour's reading. You will think me sadly querulous

to-day, Harry, but I am not happy about Dugald."

"I am sure he is looking well."

"He was flushed with running when you saw him. He is delicate, and I do not think he acquires strength as he gets older. Is he not like his mother? Oh! Harry, if I were to lose that boy! He is now my all, my only hope, my only treasure. I feel that for him alone I live, and he is the tie that binds me to her that is gone—a double link uniting me to this and the other world, to the past and the future."

"Do not be too anxious about him," said Montague, "he grows fast, which perhaps makes him look delicate just now."

"I will take him to the sea-side at the proper season, and that perhaps may strengthen him; but it will be an effort to me to leave Lowick."

Here Dugald came running into the room to show the new story book which his aunt had brought him; but, in a moment he was off again to exhibit the present to some one else.

"He is quick and clever," said Montague, "is he not."

"Too much so, I sometimes fear," replied Courtenay. "My greatest pleasure is to have him with me, and to teach him. Poor boy! I am but a moody companion for him though. You remember Mr. Otley, Harry."

"To be sure; what a fine old man he was "

"I try to remember and imitate his method of instruction."

"You could not have a more perfect model."

"I wish I had profited more by his lessons," said Courtenay; "but I have found the truth of the maxim he used to quote from his favorite Bacon—"That no preacher is listened to but time, which gives us the same train and turn of thought that elder people have tried to put into our heads before."

The Montagues made but a short stay at Lowick, for the time approached for the hearing of the case of *Hodge v. Podge*. Harry flattered himself that, at length, he had a chance of achieving some distinction in his profession, and

he was unwilling to be absent from his chambers while there was any possibility of discovering by greater diligence, any farther facts in support of his client's case. Additional instructions might be requisite, a conference or consultation might be called for, and, besides his wish to do full justice to his client, he was extremely anxious not to neglect the chance which he thought now presented itself of making way in his profession.

Montague had now been several years in practice, and his heart began to sink when he found that, from no fault of his but from mere want of opportunity, he still continued, though not absolutely a briefless barrister, to have only a small amount of business. Hour after hour, day after day, had he spent, not always with patience, sometimes almost losing hope, within his dreary chambers.

And dreary enough must these legal rooms be to those whose minds are not almost wholly occupied. To the casual visitor, chambers appear to be the choicest haunts of untidiness and dis-

comfort. A staircase confined and steep, mended perhaps, where the foot treads oftenest, with a piece of deal, which, ere it has been many days out of the carpenter's hands, assumes a coating of dirt almost sufficiently dense to assimilate it to its neighbouring boards; a low narrow door, leading into an apartment where the soot, forced down by the leaden atmosphere, has collected on the window seat, and has blackened the dingy carpet; a book-case, filled with uniform volumes of calf-skin binding, with most uninviting titles, and on many of which learned looking tomes the dust lies thick, telling how those dark mines of the wisdom of past days are neglected, or not deemed worth the working—are some of the features which a chance explorer of these legal *sancta* may not improbably observe.

The very sparrows, which appear to have a strange predilection for the localities of the Inns of Court, differ from their brethren of the hedgerow and stackyard. My poor friend, Threadbarecote, who has been utterly ruined by a Chancery suit, protracted by his opponent with

an ingenuity which would have made the famous "Cunctator" envious, and which might have induced that worthy, after having tired out his Punic foe strategically, to practise the same tactics on his own countrymen forensically, poor Threadbarecote says that the extreme impudence of these birds is owing to their living so much in the society of lawyers—"birds of a feather," quoth he; but he is soured and spiteful now. They are certainly a curious variety of the passerine family. Dingy and black, and noisy far beyond the garrulity of their species, they dry-bathe themselves in the dust or nestle down in the burnt up, rusty looking turf, chattering and quarreling with small concern or fear of the passers-by, who they perhaps know are too much occupied with their own quarrels and disputes to attend to those of the feathered race, and they build their nests in the very jaws of certain grim griffins, which seem to rear themselves as a warning—a *cave canem* to the heedless public.

There is something about the inmates of the gaunt-looking houses round the silent squares in

keeping with the general aspect and character of the place, and Threadbarecote says that the sight of a lawyer in his den, in his black coat and his dingy gown, with his letters and papers round him, always suggests to his mind a resemblance to a huge black spider, ensconced in his angular hole, on the look out for victims, or busy with his treacherous net, in the meshes of which to entangle the giddy, thoughtless fly.

But, as I have said, Threadbarecote's judgment is sadly warped.

Within one of these dim cells Montague had, for some years, daily almost, passed many monotonous hours, seldom receiving a summons to the Court of Themis, though he was one of her most constant votaries.

Each morning he hurried to chambers, though much inclined to abide by his household gods, and by the "*placens uxor*," who, fearful lest his staying with her might cause him the loss of a brief, or disappoint some client, who might not "call again," generally forbore to press him to postpone his quotidian walk. In fact, it was

Mary who cheered him on, and who, when he was wearied of waiting for the "good time coming," bade him not despair.

"Have there not been many lawyers," she would say, "who have remained longer far than you, dear Harry, without much employment, and yet have achieved greatness in the end?"

"That may be true, Mary, but how many have there not been who, tired and disgusted, have retired from the contest?"

"Ah!" she would reply, "many of those lost heart just when their fortunes (if I may use the expression) were about to change, and many of them would very likely, with a little more perseverance, have grasped all they ambited. Courage, Harry, courage; the day will yet come when we shall look back to your early struggles with complacency, and rejoice that you did not, like so many, give way to despondency."

"I hope the day you talk of will at length come."

"Oh! yes," his spirited wife would playfully respond; "and then I shall complain, as Mrs.

Talkemdown does loudly, of solitary evenings; for I hear her learned husband scarcely ever gives himself time to eat his dinner before he hastens to leave his wife for the company of some great long brief. That sort of life may do famously for people afflicted with incompatibility of temper,—that is the expression, I think—but it would not suit us at all, Harry.”

Thus jestingly would Mary cheer her husband, and Montague would walk off to Lincoln’s Inn to settle himself in his sooty room, where seldom, alas! did he receive more than a thin ill-conditioned brief, with its endorsement of “one gua” or “two guas,” and where, ever and anon, a tinge of envy would overspread his mind as he saw attorneys’ clerks hurrying past his door, with arms full of fat rolls of paper, and entering the thresholds of certain eminent counsel, or as he observed out of his dusty window the end of Sir Caustic Long-jaw’s writing table literally covered with piles of papers and briefs, in every stage of plethora.

Months which are passed this way in chambers form the sum of anything but a cheerful life,

and though Montague had been waiting for his day of success not half so long as many a man who had ultimately risen to wealth and distinction, his anxiety to obtain practice increased tenfold after his marriage, for other interests besides what were merely personal now stimulated his exertions, and depended on their results.

At this time, however, the great case of *Hodge v. Podge* engrossed all Harry's attention, and he had less leisure and smaller pretext than usual for airing his head out of his window in noting from the weathercock from what quarter the wind blew, or in coveting the red-tape-tied bundles which, from his elevated position, he could discover in the chambers on the other side of the narrow square.

The cause of *Hodge v. Podge* was appointed for hearing before the Lord Chancellor. It had been originally decided against the plaintiff, whose junior counsel had, since the first decision, retired from practice. Harry, whom the plaintiff's solicitors had sometimes employed on less

important matters, was consulted with reference to the propriety of an appeal from the judgment of the inferior Court, and though Sir Caustic Longjaw, who had been the leading counsel before the Vice-Chancellor, gave but faint hopes of success on a re-hearing, Montague, who had applied himself with much diligence and attention to master all the circumstances of the case, and all the points of law which it involved, strongly recommended an appeal to the Chancellor.

It was fortunate that Harry had spent so many hours, and taken such pains in considering the case in all its bearings and technicalities, for on the evening before that on which the cause was to be heard, Sir Caustic, who, to give him his due, was no less distinguished for legal acumen than for an undoubted critical discernment of the merits of port wine, was, after dinner, suddenly seized with an apoplectic fit, to which his short neck and rubicund countenance had long proclaimed a tendency.

The news of this disaster soon reached the ears of the plaintiff's solicitors, and one of the

firm hastened in dismay to Harry's residence. He intimated to Montague that, were it possible at that late period to engage the services of a leader, he should prefer not to commit the important interests of his client into the hands of one who could not then be otherwise than somewhat unprepared: and that, in the absence of Sir Caustic, Montague must undertake the sole management of the cause.

This announcement startled Harry not a little. He felt that the crisis of his fate had now really arrived.

He hurried back to chambers, where he spent the greatest part of the night in anxious preparation for the morning's task. Towards daylight he threw himself on a sofa for a couple of hours' rest, after which, with a sort of morbid appetite, he resumed the consideration of the important case entrusted to his advocacy.

Excitement kept his mind on the stretch, and its tension had not relaxed when the cause was called on.

The opposite parties, aware of the illness of

Sir Caustic Longjaw, were surprised that no application was to be made for postponement. The counsel and solicitors of the defendants entered the court in high spirits, and Mr. Talkemdown in taking his seat, made a pleasant remark to Mr. Sleek, one of the defendant's solicitors, on the victory in store for their client.

The case was one which embraced some curious points of law, and, owing to the interest which it consequently excited, there was an unusual muster in the Court of gentlemen of the long robe.

"Have you heard of Longjaw's seizure," said one of these learned gentlemen. "He will be a great loss to the plaintiff to-day, for I suspect the Vice-Chancellor was wrong in his decision of the case."

"Yes," replied his neighbour; "but I suppose the judgment will be affirmed, for I see Mr. Montague is alone in the cause, and he is no match for Talkemdown, who has got Bawdley and Timmins with him."

"No, certainly not. He is a sharp fellow enough, but he wants experience."

Montague certainly felt nervous. Still he rejoiced that an opportunity was at length afforded him to put forth his strength, and to produce the mental weapons which had been long lying comparatively idle; and the conviction that the prize which he coveted—success—was before him, nerved him to his task.

Montague rose and stated the case for his client.

The Chancellor was attentive, but the advocate's arguments evidently, for some time, produced no impression on the mind of the Judge.

The diffidence which Montague experienced gradually wore off as he found himself fairly launched into the sea of argument, with nothing to rely upon but his own knowledge and skill, and as he felt that a great stake was depending on his exertions.

His arguments began to "make way." The prepossessions of the learned occupant of the judicial chair were evidently vanishing.

The conclusion of Montague's address was

eloquent, so far as the term is compatible with the dry and unimpassioned nature of a Chancery suit, and his peroration was well and earnestly delivered.

The opposite counsel were heard, and Talkemdown, one of the leaders of the Court, found it necessary to exert himself to the utmost in arguing in favour of the decision appealed against.

The next day Montague was heard in reply; and right ably did he acquit himself in supporting the views which he had taken in his opening speech, and in combating the arguments of his opponents.

The Court was crowded when Montague sat down, and more than one friendly rival's hand was held out to him, in congratulation at his display of forensic ability.

The Chancellor, in giving judgment, expressed himself as having been, at first, strongly in favour of the Vice-Chancellor's view of the case, but stated that the very able arguments which had been addressed to him, and to which he had felt a pleasure in listening, had completely al-

tered his impressions. His judgment proved to be altogether in favour of Montague's client.

How proud and happy was the successful advocate that evening, as he returned to his home and informed his wife of the result of his exertions;—and not less proud and happy was Mary, who had cheered her husband's despondency, and predicted his success. Proud was she of her hopeful auguries, and brightly did the joy-beads glisten in her glad eyes as she congratulated her Harry on his first great triumph—the first of many, for “there is a tide in the affairs of men,” and, at last, had come the “turn” of that which was to lift Montague from the lowly level of his unknown and unhonoured career.

His success in *Hodge v. Podge* was not forgotten. Its result was a rapidly increasing business. Montague no longer found time halt with leaden foot in his gloomy chambers, the red-tape-bound bundles rapidly accumulated upon his table; and henceforth Harry Montague took his place amidst the ablest of the “mouth-warriors” of the day.

CHAPTER VII.

The shark is there
And the shark's prey; the spendthrift, and
The leech that sucks him.

COWPER.

Le besoin d'argent a reconcilié la noblesse avec la rôtüre, et a fait évanouir la preuve des quatre quartiers.

LA BRUYERE.

I MUST add a few strokes to some of my sketches, which have been lately lying untouched and almost forgotten.

Lord Ravensclint and Tom Hardman continued to run in couples, the one more contemptible, the other more disreputable than ever.

Hardman had become more overbearing to his companion, till his behaviour became irksome and

galling, even beyond what his spiritless associate could endure.

The young nobleman's health was, moreover, giving way under a course of dissipation, which was powerless on the iron frame and robust constitution of the partaker of his follies and excesses. He had become irritable and querulous; and the fellowship of the two promised to be, some day, abruptly broken, for recrimination and quarrels were frequent between them.

They still, however, moved about together; the one prolonging the companionship of one he hated, partly from custom,—for the couples which they had worn so long had become habitual to both;—partly from indolence, for Lord Ravensclint's inactive nature shrank from the least exertion, mental or physical;—partly from convenience—for Tom saved his Lordship a world of trouble, the trouble of thinking and acting:—while Hardman did not care to shake off an associate he despised, simply because the individual was, in more ways than one, useful to him, the chief of all being the

access which he permitted to his purse, which, though never very full, was yet, from time to time, recruited from some of those minor streamlets of the Graspmorland estates, which did not pour their tributes into the dead sea of mortgages and bonds.

Time, however, had worked this change in the relative position of the two companions, that Hardman was less cautious in serving his own interests, and Lord Ravensclint suffered himself to be plundered less composedly than formerly. For although the general object of their confederacy was to prey upon the rest of the world, Hardman had always acted on the principle, that, in default of other game, he might help himself, in moderation, from his friend's preserves.

At length the victim turned.

It was late one night. The two companions were alone in Lord Ravensclint's room. Some friends had been dining with them, and Lord Ravensclint had drunk freely, and was more excited than usual.

After the rest of the party had left, the young

nobleman, whose energies, such as they were, wakened up at the time when those of other people sought repose, said to his companion,

“What a set of muffs those fellows are, Tom, to go away at this hour; why it’s not much past twelve.”

“Notwithstanding which,” replied Hardman, “I shall turn in, too, for I was up late last night.”

“Nonsense, Tom; I shan’t sleep I know.”

His Lordship was no doubt right, for his blood-shot eyes and flushed face showed that his pulse was too fevered, and his nerves too much excited to sleep.

“Come,” he added, “we’ll have a game at *ecarté*.”

“No, I don’t want to play,” replied Hardman.

“Oh! you never do anything but what you like. I wish I could find one who is not so muf-fish as to go to bed at twelve.”

“Well, if you are determined to play, I will accommodate you,” said Hardman, with a peculiarly sinister look.

“That’s right Tom,” said the “shark’s prey;”

adding, with an absurdly patronising air, "hang it,—it won't do to let you all turn slow and stupid."

Cards were produced; and, for a long time, the two friends! played without an observation beyond what the changes and chances of the game might suggest.

And those were not many, for Ravensclint was more unlucky than usual.

Still, they remained at the table. Hardman was cool and calm, a contemptuous smile now and then passing over his features, as he watched his adversary, and provokingly noted, at the close of each game, the amount to be added to or deducted from his winnings.

Lord Ravensclint, on the contrary, became more excited, his bloodshot eyes more inflamed, and his thin hands more unsteady, as deal after deal, he gathered up the cards, and cursed the ill luck that pursued him.

"D—n," he exclaimed, at the close of a game, "who would have dreamt of my losing that. I'm

certain you mark the king four times out of five."

"You laid me three to one before the last deal," said Hardman, not appearing to take any notice of his opponent's remark.

"I suppose I did," replied Lord Ravensclint, sulkily.

"In ponies," I think, continued Hardman coolly;—"that's seventy-five, and the game is ten—oh! and you took my six to four, that's—"

"D—n your calculations. Come, I'll play you one game more."

"No, we agreed this should be the last."

"Well, what matter if we did? But I see you are afraid of the luck turning against you. You won't give me my revenge; you want to go to bed like those muffs. Win one's money and then sneak off; that's what I call cowardly."

Hardman had paid little attention to Lord Ravensclint, and had continued adding up his winnings; but at the last passionate word which

his adversary had used, he looked up, and a red angry flush mounted to his cheek.

"Will you play again?" repeated Lord Ravensclint. "One more game, and I'll make it double or quits, if you like."

"You had better not," replied Hardman slowly, looking his adversary full in the face, and speaking as if he was weighing something in his mind; "you had better not, luck is against you."

"D——n luck," rejoined Ravensclint; "will you agree?"

"If you like."

The cards were shuffled.

"It is my deal," said Hardman.

"I propose," said Ravensclint.

"No, play."

The young nobleman muttered a curse as he laid down a card.

"I mark the king," said Hardman.

"By —— you cheat," shouted Ravensclint.

"Give me the cards—they're not fair," and he snatched his adversary's hand away.

The action was so sudden that Lord Ravensclint had the cards in his possession before his adversary could attempt to prevent him from seizing them.

"What do you mean, Ravensclint?" said Hardman, rising. "Give me back my cards?"

"I will not; you've been cheating—they're not fair."

"But I will have them—give them back?"

And Hardman flew at the effeminate creature before him, like a tiger on a kid; but Lord Ravensclint had stepped back, and he rang the bell violently.

Hardman was upon him, and the fragile form of the delicate nobleman gave way before the rude and savage grasp of his powerful adversary, whose impetus was so great that he over-balanced himself, and they both came to the ground together, overturning a table at the same time.

The noise probably quickened the servant's steps, for he heard the crash and the scuffle, and then the voice of Lord Ravensclint shouting for help. An instant more, and he was in the room,

and had dragged the mastiff-like assailant from the young nobleman, who had still managed to keep the cards in his hand.

"He has robbed me—he has cheated me!" exclaimed the exhausted nobleman, "and he would have murdered me."

"Give me the cards, or I may do it, fool," said Hardman, glaring at the prostrate form of Lord Ravensclint.

"Don't, my Lord," said the servant, "he'll not touch you while I am here."

"Let me go," said Hardman to the servant; "how dare you seize me?"

"How dare you fell Lord Ravensclint?" said the man. "Stand off;" and he placed himself between the two opponents, and though Hardman would fain have treated the servant as he had the nobleman, the broad chest and the steady eye before him, and the muscular grasp he had already felt, convinced him it would be a venture not quite so certain in its result.

"Take the cards," said the gasping and terri-

fied nobleman to the servant; "do not give them up; I am sure they are not a fair pack."

"Trust me, my Lord," said the man, taking them from Ravensclint's trembling hand, and coolly putting them into his pocket, and buttoning his coat over them. He then stepped back, and, having locked the door and taken out the key, deliberately opened the window, and called loudly for a policeman.

"A clear case of assault, if nothing more," quoth the servant, musingly, as he drew in his head.

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The public were, after a time, treated to one of those exhibitions in which is displayed the lamentable spectacle of a young man sought to be hopelessly ruined by the low, cunning, unprincipled swindler.

Among the disclosures which Hardman's assault upon Lord Ravensclint led to, there oozed out an inkling of the part played by Mr. Rowell, the jockey, in the race which Sir Frederick

Courtenay's Fairplay lost, and Mr. Handicap's Doubtful won.

It led to an investigation; and the consequence was that the public lost the services of that very accomplished rider.

But though the loss might be great to his employers, Mr. Rowell reconciled himself to his altered position with considerable philosophy. He had made money in his vocation, so he could take a public-house, or rent a farm, or why should he not still do something in his old line of occupation? hire a room at the West end for a month or two, furnished with a dozen cigar boxes and a racing print, and set up business as Messrs. Square and Compass; if successful, live and thrive on his good fortune and fair fame; if not, shut up shop and "bolt," and like Messrs. Mantis and Trophonius, issue his "tips" and proclaim his oracular infallibility, from the "Bee's-wing Tavern," in the City.

Lord Ravensclint went abroad, Tom Hardman to prison—both for six months.

When the former emerged again from his re-

tirement, and re-appeared upon the world in England, he found his venerable father, the Earl of Graspmorland, as healthy and hearty as ever, and his own purse no better filled than it was wont to be.

So he bethought him of what is sometimes found by the impoverished members of our "old nobility," to be one way of paying debts that cannot be ignored any longer, and getting rid of incumbrances which have become too galling to be borne.

Although in the legal investigation of Hardman's assault and cheating, and the subsequent revelations—proceedings which had withdrawn Tom Hardman from the pale of society, and ended Rowell's exhibition of artistic performances, close "finishes," and judicious "pulls"—Lord Ravensclint had not come off scatheless in character and good name; yet the matter began to be forgotten, or, if remembered, to be thought of rather sympathetically than reproachfully with regard to the "unfortunate, amiable young nobleman"—so some people talked—"who had

been so shamefully treated." His Lordship, therefore, did not find that he was altogether excluded from the houses of the rich and fashionable, and he bethought him to turn their indulgence to his own advantage.

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There appeared, one morning, for the enlightenment and gratification of the readers of the *Morning Post*, the announcement of an "approaching marriage in high life."

By no one was the paragraph perused with such gladdened eyes as by a lady of whose portly person, good-humoured, vulgar manners, and ambitious hopes, a sketch has been given in these pages. No one, indeed, had better cause, for the announcement was that Lord Ravensclint, eldest son of the Earl of Graspmorland, would shortly lead to the Hymeneal altar the eldest daughter of John Dobison, Esq. Now, although this did not impart information to the delighted matron, it was, nevertheless, very gratifying to see it in print. It conveyed to her anxious mind a sort of assurance of the reality and genuineness of the

anticipated event. There it was in black and white: and the proud and happy mother of the bride elect, sat with the newspaper before her, again and again devouring the precious paragraph, her maternal heart and head filled with so much joy and triumph, retrospective, and anticipative, that she had fairly confused herself, and, though she herself had been instrumental in the insertion of the paragraph, she began at last to think that this crowning favour of fortune was too delightful not to be imaginary.

“What!” she exclaimed, “my son-in-law, Viscount Ravensclint, who will be Earl of Grasp-morland, and my daughter Clemmy! Yes; Clementina, Countess of Grasp-morland! How well it sounds. There’ll be grand doings at Grimcourt Castle.”

Then Mrs. Dobison fell into a strange, misty reverie, very alien to her idiosyncrasy, for she belonged to the active, not the contemplative, of womankind; and Lord Ravensclint, and Clementina Dobison, the old Earl of Grasp-morland and herself, and coronets, and the family plate, and

Grimcourt Castle, and the tall chimneys round her own dingy house, and the powdered servants, and Ann Jane, and old deeds and grants, with queer old seals dangling about them, appeared to be all pairing off, and dancing and capering fantastically round, and it all seemed so strange and dream-like, that she rubbed her eyes, and looked about the room, and rustled the newspaper, and read the paragraph again before she succeeded in bringing herself back to a real and unpoetical sense of her own actual presence and existence.

Then she suddenly bethought her that she had forgotten to order dinner, an ominous omission, indicating a serious derangement of her faculties. So she started off, bearing the precious paper in her hand, for, of course, Ann Jane and the cook would like to hear how well the paragraph sounded. And see it and read it they both did, with many "lawks" and "laws," and that morning the diurnal review of the cold joints in the larder was brief and hurried, and the whole commissariat department sadly neglected.

On her return to the drawing-room, Mrs. Dobison seated herself, as was her wont on that particular day of the week, at her Davenport, but instead of marshalling before her the weekly series of choice literature—in the knowledge of which she might safely challenge competition—consisting of the baker's, butcher's, grocer's books and other tradesmen's miscellaneous accounts, she tumbled them all carelessly into a drawer, and drew forth a packet of the thickest cream-laid note paper.

Shall we look over her shoulder as, pen in hand, she occupies herself in the task of writing to her correspondent—one of the friends of her early years. I do not think she will mind our doing so, even though we may discover that neither her style nor her orthography is perfect. But we will make every allowance for the peculiar and agitating circumstances in which she is placed. What says the note?

“MY DEAR MRS. TOMKINS,

“I cannot wait another minnit without writing to tell you of our dear Clemmy's happy and

splendid prospect. Yes, splendid indeed. Who do you think has proposed for her, and of course been accepted? Now, who do you think? But it is too bad to keep you in suspense.

“You have heard of the Earl of Graspmorland. Of course every one has, the head of one of the finest families in the world, with such a jenny-allogy. I’ve been looking at it in Burke—well not he, but his son, Lord Ravensclint (that is the second title), actually proposed to our Clemmy this very day week.

“I send you a paper, the *Post*. You don’t take it, I think, but it is quite indisputable in the world. The editor has put in the announcement of the marriage to be, so that everybody will know of it. I’ve marked it third page, second column, half way down. I believe there is some law against marking or writing in newspapers, but I don’t care if they fine me fifty pounds, I’d pay it cheerfully rather than you should not see it.

“Ah! my dear Mrs. Tomkins, you can appreciate a mother’s feelings. You thought we were

very saucy when we left you all, and Dobison didn't half like giving up his club, and thought he would never get on in the 'bo monde.' But you see I was right—wasn't I. By the way, don't be surprised if Dobison's politics are a little changed next election. You know he mustn't go against the agricultural interest now. The Earl has such a splendid property all land except a mine or two of copper, or iron, or something. Of course, I shall send you wedding cards with Lord and Lady Ravensclint upon them. Good gracious! the thought makes me quite nervous.

"My girls are out shopping or they would send their love. There's all the truso to get. So good bye, my dear Mrs. Tomkins; pray excuse all faults, you must be sure I feel in a perfect wirligig; and believe me

"Your very sincere friend,

"KIZIA DOBISON.

"N.B.—It is to be very soon. Lord Ravensclint is anxious for it to take place. He is such an aimable young nobleman, and so quiet. He was treated shamefully once by a horrid vulgar

man. I dare say you saw all about it in the papers. Good bye."

While Mrs. Dobison looks into her Davenport for an envelope, let us steal away, for after all she does not ask us to excuse her faults, nor is it right to pry into the expression of her agitated maternal feelings.

In due time, the wedding came off; and Mr. Dobison, with befitting solemnity, made over his daughter to the custody and protection of Lord Ravensclint, who was ill able to take care of himself, and Amelia and the other bridesmaids were of course, beautifully dressed, and were so unselfishly glad for Clementina, and all smiles and joy, though they secretly wished that some good fairy would appear and furnish wedding rings and coronets all round; and Mrs. Dobison felt like the winner of an empire.

Matrimony is occasionally like an epidemic. Once it appears in a family, it sometimes spreads among the younger members of it like influenza or meazles, and papa and mamma see their sons or daughters affected, one after another, with

the same juvenile complaint which they themselves passed through years before.

Within six months after the marriage of Lady Ravensclint, her sister Amelia became the wife of Mr. Scapegrace, another of the scions of an ancient stock, which—like the trees in certain districts, which the traveller may remark to be seamed and scored from head to root, to extract every drop of resin from them—had been well nigh exhausted, and was now ill able to give fruit to the many craving hands and mouths that sought it. The ancient tree had, in fact, been so slashed and hacked in order to find fuel to keep warm the hearths of several Israelitish acquaintances of Mr. Scapegrace, that its venerable trunk would, ere long, have been distributed among them, had it not been for the timely support and invigorating effect of Amelia's marriage portion.

Mr. Scapegrace, who had for some time found it difficult to shake off the above-mentioned acquaintances, who, like tiresome, ill-mannered bores, had become odiously familiar, had been

meditating a sojourn upon the continent; but now, such thoughts were banished, and he remained in England, a credit to his tailor, an authority on shirt collars and dress boots, and the wonder, admiration, and envy of many who aspired to be the leaders of fashion and the first daring exemplars of the eccentricities of costume.

Happy Amelia! to have been the means of retaining in his fatherland such an ornament of society, a citizen whom his country could not afford to lose.

Thus were the two Miss Dobisons notably and advantageously disposed of, and Mr. and Mrs. Dobison had "done their duty." Their mission was accomplished. They had sailed out from their harbour—the home of their early and less aspiring years—out on the wide sea of an unknown world, with a precious charge. They had tried many markets and boldly sought an advantageous bargain among the high and noble. The venture had prospered, the speculation had succeeded, the cargo was disposed of.

Why should we follow any further the fortunes

of Clementina Ravensclint and Amelia Scapegrace? Why talk of a sickly husband or a spendthrift? Why speculate on the possibility of the stout old Earl surviving his unhealthy son, and of Clementina never becoming Countess of Graspamorland? Why deem it possible that Mrs. Scapegrace should ever find herself the trembling, shrinking, ill-used wife of a dissolute drunkard? Why moralise on marriages made on the one side for money, on the other for station, or waste our pity on the imaginary contingencies of wives being condemned to "drag the marriage chain" throughout long years of disappointment or unhappiness? Good, honest, plain, Mrs. Dobison did not think of these things, neither will we.

Lady Ravensclint—Mrs. Scapegrace—we wish you every happiness.

What now remains for Mr. and Mrs. Dobison to do? Their daughters married, the aim and occupation of these exemplary parents were at an end. Why should they not return to the post from which they started, the envy, no doubt, of

Mrs. Tomkins and numerous others of their acquaintances? There they might, if they wished, resume some of their former habits, to Mr. Dobison at least far more congenial than any they had of late years adopted. He might again fix his dinner hour at four if he liked, and, without being annoyed and disturbed by visitors whose manners he could not and would not ape, and whom he feared as well as disliked, yield himself up to his bottle of sound old port, the commercial intelligence, and the money market; and, a greater man than he used to be, finish a social evening at his club.

Mrs. Dobison would take infinite pleasure in rehearsing to her friend Mrs. Tomkins and others the adventures and incidents of their foray into the unknown land which she had explored.

The saloons of Paris, the gay spas of Leamington and Cheltenham, the vast world of London, she would expatiate on *ad infinitum*. Her dear amiable son-in-law, Lord Ravensclint: that

charming creature her other son-in-law, Mr. Scapegrace; the venerable Earl of Graspmorland—Clemmy's papa-in-law—would be never-failing topics. She might, through the medium of her favourite newspaper, "see, herself unseen," all that was passing on the stage she had so successfully trod, and, from her extended acquaintance, her interest in that delightful *Post* would be increased.

And when—in the course of events it could not be long—Clementina should become Countess of Graspmorland, and went to live at Grimcourt Castle, she and Mr. Dobison could, whenever they should find themselves dull or wanted a little change, run down to ——shire, and the meeting would do them both good, and keep them in their proper circle of society.

Mrs. Dobison, then, did not make much opposition when her husband proposed that they should return to their old mansion, which he reminded her he had always refused to dispose of, ever retaining the intention of passing the evening of his days in quiet and comfort, where

their morning and meridian had been spent in labour and activity.

So they took their leave of the fashionable world, and the scenes of their struggles and their conquests; and Mr. Dobison at least, with unalloyed joy and gratitude, found himself once more enveloped in the smoke of his native town; and, as Menippus, coming from the shades into the light, thus apostrophised the portal of his habitation,—

᾽Ω χᾷρε μέλαθρον, πρόπολα θεστίας ἡμης
᾽Ως ἀσμένος σ' ἐσείδον ἐς φάος μόλων,—

so Mr. Dobison, *e contrà*, coming from the brilliancy of the fashionable and aristocratic world, into the cloudy atmosphere of labour and industry, congratulated himself, in the plain and undorned vernacular, upon his escape from the bustle, confusion, trammels, and conventualities of a higher sphere, and upon his return to his own familiar and honourable home.

Here then we bid them adieu.

CHAPTER VIII.

"The rolling billows beat the rugged shore,
As they the earth would shoulder from her seat."

SPENCER.

"My delicate boy—gone! vanished!"

DECKER.

SIR FREDERICK COURTENAY had torn himself from the privacy and congenial solitude of Lowick, and, in the hope of strengthening his little boy, Dugald, had taken a house for some months by the sea-side.

He could not bear to mingle with the crowds which every summer flock to certain fashionable towns on the coast. It would have been too irksome, too grating to his feelings to live in the

publicity of parades, and terraces, and piers; to be constantly meeting some casual acquaintance, or inquisitive bore, amongst the almost ephemeral population which congregates to flutter, and sport, and bathe, and dance, and flirt, and read novels, and look through telescopes, and pick up shells at these curious places of resort.

There is, on the southern coast of England, a village close to the sea, distant a mile or two from one of these favoured towns. But its gaudy sister monopolises all the attention of the pleasure hunter, health seeker, or excursionist. These pass by the humble village in hundreds. It is like the Cinderella of the tale, and, while its flaunting sister spreads itself out in terraces and crescents, and parades, it never changes, or seeks to change, its unpretending, homely guise.

It was here that Sir Frederick had taken a house. The quiet of the place suited him, and his privacy was seldom invaded, for there were no attractions about it suggestive of pic-nics or excursions. And yet, with an amiable fear lest

this passion for solitude might proceed from aught that was selfish, and dreading that Dugald would be dull and moped while there was so much to amuse him within reach, Courtenay would sometimes restrain his own feelings, and walk over the downs beside his boy's pony, that Dugald might see the pretty shops with all the curious shells in their windows made into flowers and boxes, and might watch the gay pleasure boats and the crowds of people that disembarked from the swarming steamers.

Everything was new and an object of interest to Dugald. The first sight of the sea produced in him a powerful emotion. Does there not sometimes take place a sudden and marvellous expansion in the growing mind analogous to the bursting of some fruits, or the development of the leaf or flower?

This new presence of an unknown power in its wonderful extent and energy, was a great impulse influencing and stirring the boy's faculties.

He had anxiously and almost feverishly anticipated the first view of the sea. When his eyes

rested on the wide waste of waters, his childish feeling displayed themselves, at first very naturally—he clapped his hands with boyish glee, while his heart bounded at the presence of the glad *eureka*: but this boyish burst passed away in an instant, and he became absolutely silent; his mind and heart were both swelling with an undefined rapture as the knowledge of the works of the Almighty grew within him.

His father noted and was almost alarmed at the result; though the outward impression soon became fainter the inward expansion remained, just as the flower once unfolded never shrinks again into the bud, nor the fruit into the capsule it has burst.

But I must not halt in the progress of my tale to note the development of Dugald's mind. His father had perceived it, and thus both preceptor and pupil took increased interest in the daily task and the ordinary routine of instruction which it would be impossible to assert had always been welcome to either.

Thus four or five months had passed.

Nor had they been unprofitable as regarded the object of Sir Frederick's visit to the coast. The father's hopes that the sea air would benefit his child's health had been realized beyond his expectations, and the improvement, without detracting aught from Dugald's interesting and beautiful countenance, was visible in the freshness and heightened colour of his face. He was a singularly handsome boy, and the very image of his mother, with the same large dark eyes and clear brown complexion, the same high brow and thin lips, the same rich lustrous hair. He was

A child as beautiful
As ever clung around a mother's neck,
Or father fondly gazed upon with pride.

The autumn had been unusually fine, and the great benefit which Dugald had derived from the sea air and bathing, had induced Sir Frederick to protract his stay beyond the customary limit of such visits. He had, however, made preparations for returning to Lowick in a few days.

That month had just commenced, the first day

of which is called, with pregnant meaning, the day of "All Saints." On that morning Sir Frederick had heard the joyful invitation with which the liturgy of his Church commences her service, and his thoughts had been upon that day more than usually fixed on the being who was never indeed absent from his mind, for he trusted that she was among those for whom the summons to rejoice was given.

The night which succeeded that day was wild and stormy. The sun had set with a red and fiery disk, and, even after it had sunk beneath the horizon, the western sky glowed for awhile like a sea of molten gold, and the clouds drifted rapidly across the heavens.

As the evening wore on, the wind increased in violence, and during the night it blew a hurricane. It swept across the sea, lifting the waters from their slumbers; it dashed the white crests of the yeasty billows against the rocks, and carried their salt spray against the windows of houses far inland; it careered over the downs gathering the sandy surface in tortured eddies, and whirling

it around till the heavens sent down their waters. The roaring of the wind, the booming of the waves, the dashing of the rain, might prompt the thought that, on such a night, there were spirits abroad riding the blast, bidding the slumberers from their tombs, and calling upon the ocean to give up its dead.

It was Courtenay's nightly practice to visit the apartment where Dugald slept, before retiring to his own. The child's was, in fact, only an inner room opening into his father's. As usual, Sir Frederick did so upon this evening.

In spite of the storm that raged without, the child was sleeping as soundly and calmly as though that blustering gale was but the soft south summer zephyr that had often wafted fragrance over his infant cradle at Lowick. His right arm encircled his head; and on his cheek the thick dark locks clustered like tendrils.

The father stood for a moment beside his child's bed; then placing the taper on one side lest the light should fall too glaringly on the boy's eyelids, he bent down low and listened, with held

or subdued breath, to that of the dear slumberer, which was so gentle that it never raised the snowy coverlid.

The beautiful boy lay in his innocent sleep on his undisturbed cot, as rests the unflickering moonbeam on the glassy bosom of some sheltered mountain lake, and as Sir Frederick gazed upon him, and thought how in him was centred all that bound him to earth and life, a gush of parental tenderness welled strong and warm from the spring of his sad heart, and he stooped to press his lips upon the fair clear brow of his boy, but a gust of increased violence rattled the window-sash, as though it clamoured for entrance to disturb the peacefulness of that sacred chamber, so loudly that the child, but with no start or cry, woke and opened his eyes.

"Oh! papa," said he smiling, "is that you? I was dreaming that we were at Lowick, in the summer house on the top of the chalk hill, and, all of a sudden, I thought I heard a clap of thunder."

"It was the blast shaking the window that

woke you, for it is a rough and stormy night: but go to sleep again, Dugald, and I will sit beside you."

"But I am not sleepy now, papa; though I would try to sleep if I thought I should dream that dream again."

"What was it, my boy?"

"I fancied we had returned home. I suppose I did so because we have been talking of going back in a day or two, and that we had gone out to see how everything was looking, and what had happened since we left—you and I, and old Neptune. Oh! papa, how glad he was to see us again, and he jumped and galloped about and rubbed his cold nose against my hands, and was quite wild with joy. Well, papa, we went to the stables, and there was Favori looking so black, and sleek, and fat, and old Kirkley said he was so fresh that I should hardly be able to hold him. Then we passed through the garden: it was summer—how strange that I should think it was summer just as the winter is beginning!—and all the flowers were out, and the birds were

singing, and the sun was shining so warm and bright; and then we went to the rabbit house, but the rabbits had grown wild, and instead of sitting up on their hind legs, and rubbing their faces with their fore paws, and pricking their ears quite prettily, as they used to do, they all ran off into their inner house, huddling up in the corner. After this we walked through the shrubbery. Oh! papa, see if Bully is safe in his cage, for I dreamt that we found him lying quite dead on the ground, with all his pretty feathers strewed about the walk. Is he safe, papa?"

"To be sure he is," replied his father, going up to a cage which contained Dugald's pet, a fine piping bullfinch; "there he is, fast asleep, he was so, at least, but the light has woke him."

"Of course he would be safe, for it was only a dream; that was the only unpleasant part of it. We walked on, and just as we got to the end of the shrubbery, all of a sudden we met——"

"Well, Dugald, whom did we meet?"

"Oh! papa, it was—it was—mamma. She

was dressed all in white, with a long white veil on her head, and she took my hand out of yours without saying a word, and we walked towards the church; and then—I don't know how it was—you and I were alone again in the summer-house, and we watched the jackdaws as they flew in and out of the holes in the cliff, and then I heard a clap of thunder, and I woke and found you here. I wish the dream had been true—not that about Bully, though—and that we were back at Lowick."

"We shall be there in a very few days, and I dare say we shall find your pony and the rabbits much as you did in your dream. But you must go to sleep again, Dugald, it is only eleven. Come, my boy, lie down."

As Sir Frederick said this, he kissed his child and laid him gently down—for Dugald had raised himself up when he told his father what he had dreamt—and put the bed-clothes carefully round him.

Then he sat down beside the cot, and saw his boy soon close his eyes, and sleep, that never

comes to our anxious, troubled hearts and busy memories in our after years, as it does uncourted in our sinless, peaceful, long nights of childhood, hovered over the child's smooth eyelids, and, even in a few minutes, the same quiet, regular breathing as before showed to the watching father that his boy was again slumbering.

But Sir Frederick kept his seat for half an hour or more, lest the gruff voice of the storm without might again wake his child; but Dugald continued to sleep so soundly that, after another long affectionate look, and a heartfelt "God bless you, my boy," he retired from the room.

When morning dawned, the storm had somewhat abated. The rain came only in partial drifts, and the wind blew rather in fitful gusts than with uninterrupted violence.

"Oh! papa," exclaimed Dugald, when he first met his father, "what a night it has been! I thought the house would have come down: I am sure I felt it rock."

"Did you wake again after I left you?"

"Yes, and I lay listening to the wind and

rain, I don't know how long. Do let us go out and watch the sea. Perhaps there has been some dreadful shipwreck."

"But that would not please you, Dugald?"

"Oh! no, I thought so much last night of the poor sailors who might be out at sea: I could not sleep, I thought so much of them."

"I could not sleep either," said his father.

Sleep had indeed scarcely visited Courtenay's eyes. He had risen tired and depressed, a weight alike upon his limbs and his heart, and he would gladly have remained within the house. But he saw that Dugald was all impatience to be on the cliffs, and he did not like to thwart the boy's inclination and desire to witness the sublime spectacle of the raging sea.

So they went out together after breakfast, and made their way towards the highest part of the rocky coast.

The rain had ceased, and the clouds were drifting athwart the sky in torn and dismembered masses. The wind still blew at times with extreme violence, and the sea, now almost at

high tide, had assumed a dark leaden colour, save where the white surf showed like the foam on the jaws of an infuriated beast, and surged and rolled with undiminished power.

"Look, Dugald," said Sir Frederick, "there is a ship out at sea."

"Where, papa, where?" asked the boy fully occupied in holding on his cap, and steadying himself against the wind.

"Come here, and take my hand; now look."

They could descry a speck on the horizon, a luckless vessel striving to keep far away from the land and trusting to the chance of riding out the gale.

"How grand this is!" exclaimed Dugald, his face glowing with the buffeting of the wind: "listen to the sea how it roars! How glad I am we came!"

"It is well Dugald that we had already settled to go home so soon, for this storm has certainly given us notice to quit, Don't go so near the edge," said his father with a shudder.

They had attained almost the highest part of

the cliffs, which here, with the exception of a few detached rocks, spread out in a surface of rough table land of some extent.

Worn by the action of the waters, the coast, for some distance, presented an even perpendicular face to the sea, except that here and there the waves had hollowed out some softer portion into a cave or archway, into which they rushed and raced with headlong speed, making the earth tremble with the concussion.

Dugald had gone to watch their rude play when his father bade him not approach so near the precipice.

He came back flushed and startled, but laughing, for two giant waves, the one pent up within a cavern, the other hurrying inwards, met at the entrance, and the collision dashed the crests of both high into the air, and the wind had borne their spray against Dugald's face. It frightened him at first, but only for a moment, and he again ran bounding along, his spirits heightened by the excitement of the scene.

There was a rough-coated, hard-faced man

standing with a telescope in his hand—a pilot, or, perhaps, one of the coast guard.

Sir Frederick went up to him.

“Have you heard of any damage done last night?” asked Courtenay.

“They say,” replied the man, “that there is a schooner on shore below the bay, but most of the crew have been saved; but some fishing smacks have run on the rocks a mile or so to the north, and not a man has escaped.”

The man again raised his glass, and looked intently through it.

“Do you see more than one ship?” asked Sir Frederick.

“Only one, and I’ve been watching her this half-hour. I cannot make her out, but I should say she is a schooner. If she doesn’t mind she will be on the sands.”

“I can scarcely distinguish her,” said Courtenay.

“Take the glass, Sir; you will make her out, perhaps, better than I can; fifty years of rough service tell upon a man’s eyes.”

Courtenay took the telescope, and brought it to bear on the vessel.

"You will have to alter it," observed the man: "it won't suit your sight."

Sir Frederick did so, and was gazing through the glass at the labouring vessel, when a sudden scream caught his ear, and he saw Dugald at a little distance struggling with a woman, who evidently grasped him with no tender hands.

Courtenay sprang forward.

"Ha, ha," she shrieked, with a laugh of a mocking fiend; "stop, Sir Frederick Courtenay, stop I say—one step more and your precious boy goes into yon boiling cauldron below"—and she dragged Dugald with her and stood on the very verge of the precipice. "Do you know me, Sir Frederick Courtenay? Do you know me, I ask you? It's long since we met, long indeed—ha, ha! They could not keep me in their prison though; and I've come with the storm, and found you at last. Now, give me back my daughter."

"I know not where she is," replied Courtenay, terrified, and not daring to approach her; he

would rather have seen his child in the fangs of a lioness.

"Give me back my child," she repeated, heedless of his words. "You stole her from me, give her back, or I will have my revenge."

"Oh! papa, papa, save me, take me away," screamed Dugald, struggling.

"Peace, be quiet," said the woman, shaking the child roughly, but keeping her eyes still fixed on Sir Frederick.

"In mercy loose the boy," exclaimed the agonized father, sinking down upon his knees, "and I will search the world for her."

"And the graves too?" she shrieked. "Give me, give me back my child."

"I will. Oh! loose the boy."

Sir Frederick rose and advanced a step.

"Stop, seducer—and deceiver too: my child is lost for ever, but I will have vengeance." And the mother of the erring Beatrice drew up her gaunt wirey figure and stood with the terrified child in her bare wasted arms, with her grizzled

hair uncovered, and her loose disordered dress tossed by the blast.

Sir Frederick sprang forward to seize his boy. One step—and her demon laugh and Dugald's scream were lost in the roar of the seething waters that engulfed them.

Courtenay would have precipitated himself down in the hope of rescuing his child, but the strong hand of the sailor who had witnessed the fearful interview, dragged him back, as he exclaimed, “madman, 'tis certain death,”—and the wretched father, after a vain convulsive struggle to repeat the attempt, sank down lifeless on the ground.

Retribution! has the debt been paid?

CHAPTER IX.

Break, break, break,
On thy cold grey stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fishermen's boy
That he shouts with his sisters at play!
Oh well for the sailor lad
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on
To the haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still.

Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me."

TENNYSON.

It was no wonder that fever, even to madness, stretched Sir Frederick Courtenay upon his bed.

It was expected at first that life would yield, and that death would, in pity, seal up for ever the fountain of his woe, but the vital powers of his body seemed inexhaustible, and rather to be strengthened and built up with the wreck of his mind, which appeared dashed to fragments.

His ravings, at times, were terrific. Incidents of which he had been either an active or a passive witness were re-enacted, with an almost superhuman energy. There were scenes reproduced of quarrels round the gambling table, the deliberate accusation of foul play, the enraged retort, the lie given, the blow struck. There were other scenes of guilty passion, words of intoxicated admiration, the pledging of unhallowed love, the rage of jealousy, the madness of desertion, the word of infamy, the curse. There were denunciations of the false friend, the expression of the most intense hatred, the utterance of thoughts of blood. There were heart-pourings of pathetic grief, of self-accusation, of tender pardon, of renewed and glowing affection, of the softest soothing, of the wildest woe. There

was the hysterical laugh, the scream of distress, the flood of tears, the prayer of the crushed spirit.

The scene upon the cliffs was repeated over and over again with painful accuracy, but was often prolonged by the force of the imagination which produced a fancied contest with the waves, sometimes ending in the nervous hands of the father bearing his drowning child safely to the shore, at other times in unsuccessful struggles, despairing pangs, and utter exhaustion.

Thus was performed the vivid and varied drama of a life-time—the theatre a sick room, the stage a bed of agony, and the actor almost a maniac!

Montague had been sent for by Sir Frederick's servants, and he continued to give up every portion of his business that he could conscientiously relinquish to attend the bedside of his friend. A gentle and kind nurse he proved, for his ministration was a labour of love. No female hand could bathe with softer touch the temples whose veins were swollen like knotted cords, and

which throbbed with a full and almost bursting pulse, as though the blood within them had become a stream of molten lead; no mother could be more compliant with the ways and wishes of her fretful child. Night after night did Montague keep his painful watch, now shuddering at the storm which raged within the blasted tenement, now suspicious of the calm that succeeded.

Thus, in the unconsciousness (it was hoped) of the wild tempest that shattered every faculty of Courtenay's mind, and drew to the utmost tension the life strings of his frame, and as it seemed to those who watched, in the worst endurance and the most painful effort of dire and transcendant anguish, "day rose and night returned" to the sufferer.

At length, his recovery was vouchsafed.

It was a clear, bright morning. All night Montague had remained beside Courtenay's bed and his sleep had been less disturbed than usual.

When he woke he remained for some time

looking fixedly on Montague. It was what he had often done before, but there was less wildness in his eyes. There seemed a glimmering of perception, a striving at recollection appeared in his countenance.

At last, his lips moved—he whispered, “Harry.”

Montague bent down and said, “Yes, it is I, Fred, Harry Montague.”

“Yes, yes,” the sick man whispered again, “I know. Tell me, Harry, where they have laid him.”

Montague replied: “Oh! Fred, dear Fred! do not ask, wait till you are stronger.”

“But I must—I will know!” exclaimed Courtenay; and his raised voice told that a paroxysm was at hand.

It came like a sudden squall over the surface of a mountain lake, and the mind and body of the sufferer which had lain, for awhile, in the peace of their mere helplessness, were alike once more made the sport of the mad spirit that possessed them.

But a gleam of reason had shone through the long darkness, for Courtenay never before had recognized any one, nor spoken with any degree of consciousness of his child as really dead.

Montague could not truthfully have answered the father's question where they had laid his boy, for the remorseless sea had never yielded up its prey. The gaunt revolting form of the mad woman, with her shrivelled arm and wirey hair, had gone down into Ocean's depths, clasp- ing the beautiful boy with his delicate limbs, and his long dark locks; the gnarled trunk had fallen together with the little tendril; the blasted mind and the budding intellect had been quenched at the same moment, and perhaps the destroyer and the victim might lie side by side in some unexplored cavern till the day when sea as well as earth must give back its plunder.

In a day or two, Courtenay showed other and more decided symptoms of returning recollection, and though reason for a long time tottered and seemed about to fall, no more to rise, she at last regained her power, and asserted her supremacy.

But what a wreck was there! The mind shaken, the body broken, both weak almost as those of an infant. Yet time worked its healing influences on both. The mind recovered even more quickly than the body which it had shattered, and long after reason had resumed her sway and become permanent, the over-strained limbs were powerless to stir from couch or sofa.

How precious to the father became the little possessions, the toys, the books of his poor boy; and Dugald's bullfinch—how Courtenay doated on that bird. He had the cage brought near him, and the door of it opened. Then the bird would hop out, and would trill his soft, plaintive melodies close beside the stricken patient.

The following is, it is said, a superstition of an Indian tribe. True or not, it is very beautiful. They go with birds to the graves of their departed relatives, and there, loading them with kisses and caresses, let them fly, believing that they will bear to the loved dead these proofs of affection and remembrance.

Perhaps some feeling akin to this was in Courtenay's mind; for he would stroke and kiss the pretty bird that cared not to elude his grasp, but would stand on his finger, and hide its beak between his thin lips, whilst love—a father's love, swelled within his heart, as though he deemed that the spirit of his lost child was looking on, and joyed that his little favourite was not neglected; and though the tears coursed down Sir Frederick's cheeks, and dropped on the black, glossy head of the bird, yet the mourner felt strangely soothed and comforted.

His limbs, too, gradually regained their strength, and more rapidly when his long confinement within the house was ended.

Sir Frederick was about to leave the sea-side.

Montague had been absent from his friend as little as possible, and was now with him, making some preparations for their departure.

“Harry,” said Sir Frederick, “leave those things, and give me your arm; let us go out.

I am better, stronger than I have felt, and the day is fine."

"With all my heart, Fred, I can finish these letters when we return."

They went out of the house, Courtenay leaning on Montague's arm. The former had said that he felt stronger and better—what must he have been? For his cheeks were pale and sunken, like those of one on whom consumption has almost done its worst. The black clothes hung loosely on his once full and stalwart frame, his step was feeble and uneven, and his once bold, upright head was bowed like that of an old man, whom nature makes to look down on the earth that must, ere long, be his resting place.

"Where shall we go?" said Montague: "on the pier? It is warm and sunny there; and we shall catch the fresh breeze from the sea."

"No, not there to-day," replied Courtenay. "We will go upon the cliffs."

"The cliffs! Oh! do not let us go there. You are not able to do so much. You will tire yourself, it will do you harm."

"I must go there before we leave," said Courtenay, firmly. "I must see the place where I lost—my—my poor boy."

"You had better not, Fred, it will do no good. It will only retard your recovery. Do not, I beg."

"I must, Harry, I must; I shall not be the worse for it. It cannot renew a grief which has never had an interruption. I feel that it will be a consolation to me to revisit the spot. Why, otherwise, do people seek the graves of their dead friends? I, alas! cannot mourn over that of my lost child—for he, poor boy! has none. The day is fine, unusually so, we may not have another like it; come."

Montague saw that it was useless to endeavour to dissuade Courtenay from the walk, and was silent.

They commenced the ascent of the cliffs by the very way that Courtenay and Dugald had mounted them on the fatal day.

The friends spoke little. It was too mournful an expedition to allow Montague to talk of in

different subjects, and Courtenay's thoughts were entirely fixed upon that last sad walk with his child, the circumstances of which each turn in the path made painfully vivid and familiar to his memory.

At length the summit of the path was gained.

It was a glorious day, how different from that which was passing in rage and destruction when Courtenay last stood on that spot! The sun shone with unclouded brightness, its rays glittering on the slumbering ocean; the air was still, the pennant on the flag-staff hung droopingly round it, the haze made the horizon near yet indistinct, and the smoke from the passing steamer rested like a cloud over it, completely obscuring its outline.

They walked on a little way in silence.

"Had we not better turn?" said Montague.

"No, no, not yet," replied Courtenay; "we have not yet come to the fatal place."

"You cannot know the exact spot, Fred: we have no need to call in the imagination to add to our distresses."

"Not know it! I could find my way to it blindfolded; we have not yet reached the highest part of the cliffs. That is it, beyond those rocks. It was there the pilot stood, but for whose strong arm, my sorrows had long since been ended with my poor boy's joys."

Sir Frederick moved on more quickly. Montague saw that he was becoming excited, but, although he feared the consequences of his agitation, he knew that expostulation would be useless, so he merely said, "Lean on me, Fred; do not walk up this rising ground so quickly—let us rest a moment."

"No, no, I do not want to rest; see, this was where the pilot stood—on this very spot, and my Dugald ran on to those rocks whilst I was talking to him. Behind that rock she—she must have been concealed: there—there, come to it!" And Courtenay stepped forward, almost dragging Montague on; excitement gave him strength, and how great it was the wildness of his eyes, and the drops of perspiration on his face declared. "Here, here she stood," con-

tinued Courtenay, "on this spot; when I turned at his cry, I saw my boy in her arms. O, Dugald, Dugald, my precious darling boy!"

It might have been from weakness, it might have been from emotion, that Courtenay withdrew his arm from Montague's, and sank down on his knees at the very verge of the perpendicular precipice; his hands—oh! how thin and white they were!—were clasped convulsively together, and his head was bowed down upon them almost over the impending ledge.

Montague was alarmed; a dreadful anticipation crossed his mind for an instant, but Courtenay remained quite still—motionless as a statue on the summit of the awful precipice at the foot of which the wavelets sported playfully.

"Come, Courtenay, come away," said Montague at length; "do let us return."

The words roused Sir Frederick. He turned his haggard face towards the speaker; how those few minutes had changed its expression; they had brought back upon it a wild, vacant

look, almost such as it had borne in the paroxysms of fever and delirium.

“Do not stay any longer; do come away,” repeated Montague.

“I forgot you were here; forgive me, Harry.”

Courtenay attempted to rise, but all his strength was gone, and Montague helped him. He stood quite still for a while, leaning heavily on his friend’s arm, with his head bowed down upon his breast.

“I suppose,” said he at length, raising his head with a deep sigh, “I suppose I shall be allowed to put a cross up here. I should like to mark the spot.”

“No objection will be made, I am sure,” replied Montague.

“I should like very much to do so. Will you see about it for me, Harry?”

“I will, Fred, as soon as we get back. Come we have a long way to go; do let us return.”

With gentle violence, Montague drew Courtenay away.

It was not without difficulty that Sir Frede-

rick reached the village. The excitement which had given his limbs a false energy was gone, and the reaction showed itself in a painful prostration of strength. When they arrived at the house, Sir Frederick was quite exhausted, and for some days was unable to move off a sofa.

"I was wrong, Harry," said Courtenay; "I own it; I was wrong to go on the cliffs—doubly so, for I have no right to keep you here. But if I shall not be able to leave in a few days, you must return to town, for you must be sadly in arrear with your business."

"Then I must work double tides," observed Montague.

"The cross, you say, will be finished in a few days."

"Yes; but perhaps not before we leave."

"I should like to see it erected, but I promise you I will not do so without your consent."

Sir Frederick did not revisit the cliffs, for the weather became stormy and cold. Courtenay's

debility prevented his attempting the ascent again on foot, and the ground was too rough and uneven to allow a carriage to approach the melancholy spot.

A stone cross, protected by an iron railing, was erected on the very place where the weird woman stood with the struggling boy in her gaunt arms. There are carved on it, in addition to the date of the tragical event, the words—

DUGALD,

ONLY CHILD OF SIR FREDERICK COURTENAY,

OF LOWICK,

AGED SEVEN YEARS.

But the sad incident needs no details to keep it from oblivion. The weather-beaten pilot, as he rests his telescope on the iron bar of the railing, remembers the mournful story, and thinks of his own little ones in his cottage; as the fishing boats, one by one, double the headland on their way to their nightly stations on the deep, the sailor, with an exclamation of pity

or terror, looks up to the memento on the high beetling cliff; and the children of the hamlets around, in the midst of their playful wanderings, hush their merry laugh as they pass by "Dugald's Cross," and think of the pure joyous being to whose dear memory it was raised.

CHAPTER X.

The bough had broken under "the burden of the unripe fruit." And when, after a season, he looked up again from the blindness of his sorrow, all things seemed unreal * * * His household gods were broken, he had no home. His sympathies cried aloud from his disconsolate soul, and there came no answer from the busy turbulent world around him. He did not willingly give way to grief. He struggled to be cheerful—to be strong. But he could no longer look into the familiar faces of his friends * * * He went abroad, that the sea might be between him and the grave. Alas! between him and his sorrow there could be no sea but that of time.

LONGFELLOW.

It is a beautiful and graphic description—the heading of this chapter—of one upon whom the hand of grief has been set, and applicable to him whose sins and sorrows I am recording.

At length Sir Frederick Courtenay was able to leave the sea side, that shore on which, in the sunny summer time, he had watched the ruddier

bloom of increased health that had come with the fresh breeze over the curling waters, fix itself on the cheek of his precious boy; that shore from which he again had looked with haggard eye on the wintry waters, dark, and blank, yet brighter far than his sad heart.

He did not go down to Lowick, its loneliness would now have overpowered him, but, for some months, he became the guest of the Montagues; and their sympathy and kindness, Harry's friendship, and Mary's sweet cheerfulness of mind and manner, contributed much towards his restoration, so far as was possible, to his usual state of mind and body.

In Montague's rapid professional success, he took much pride and delight. But he said to him one day, "Harry, why do you work so hard? Less exertion will insure you a sufficient income, and you need have no thought for others, for you and they will have Lowick when I am gone, and a few more years will repair all the harm my follies ever did to the property.

"No, Fred," rejoined Montague, "think not

that I shall ever calculate upon such a contingency."

"You may, Harry."

"Besides, Fred, you forget that you are very little older than I am."

"Not much," said Courtenay, pointedly—"in years. Any way, that little fellow will not require your savings."

This was said in allusion to a small piece of humanity, a very little boy, who had recently taken possession of certain apartments, long clothes, and a cradle, in the upper story of the house, hitherto monopolised by his sister, but who was now lying laughing in his sleep on his mother's lap.

When he was born, Montague had asked Courtenay to be godfather to the boy. At first, Sir Frederick answered, "no, no, Harry, there is a fatality upon me and mine, don't let me bring evil near you."

"I do not fear it," replied Montague.

"And yet," continued Courtenay, "I am wrong to give way to such an idea."

"Then do not entertain it," said Harry.

"But—"

"Let me supply the rest. If I have no fatalist's fears why should you suggest them? Mary asks you, do not refuse her and be the cause of the first disappointment that breaks in on her now perfect joy."

"Well then, let it be as you and she wish."

So the little fellow had taken Courtenay's name; and though the unconscious babe by his presence sometimes brought tears into the eyes of the childless widower, Sir Frederick became dotingly fond of his little namesake, and seemed to take a pleasure in looking into futurity, and seeing the gap which the loss of his own boy had made, filled, as far as was possible, by [the] child of his nearest relative and best friend.

After some months spent with the Montagues, Sir Frederick went abroad. He wandered from place to place, seeking, perforce, change of scene and even physical exertion and endurance; but the effort was merely mechanical, and produced

no diversion in his mind from the sadness which overclouded it.

The fashionable picture-gallery, the busy towns, crowded stations, the mere publicity inseparable from travelling were repulsive to him; and it was with a feeling of relief and comfort that he found himself in a small French village, neglected by the tourist, where not one of the poor inmates could speak a word of any language but their own rude *patois*.

It was a hamlet situated amid the hills whose sides were clothed with forests of the dark green pine, and whose valleys were spread with meadows of the richest verdure derived from the gay sparkling trout streams, which, at times, were diverted over the turf.

Within this hamlet Courtenay dwelt some months; and the soft stillness that brooded over the vales, and the wild solitude of the "pathless woods" had more influence over his mind than all the changes and crowds he had so unwillingly endured during his journey to it.

When Courtenay had resolved to make more than a mere passing visit to the village, he called upon the priest whom he had seen officiating in the little chapel on the hill side, for he thought that courtesy might claim this effort from him.

He was an aged man. Courtenay was taken with his appearance; to borrow a few lines from Sterne: his "was one of those heads Guido has so often painted, mild, pale, penetrating, free from all common-place ideas of fat contented ignorance: looking downwards upon the earth, it looked forwards, but looked as if it looked at something beyond this world."

With this old man Courtenay became intimate. His manners were different from what the mourner had dreaded in meeting or making acquaintances; he was so unobtrusive, so little inquisitive, so courteous, so feeling and yet so cheerful; at length Courtenay often sought to spend an hour with him in his little humble parlour.

One day the old man told Courtenay how it was that he had fixed his dwelling in this solitary spot. It was a strange story; but revolu-

tions and dynastic changes are productive of effects on individuals, as on nations, more wonderful than the creations of fancy. Courtenay then understood how one of such innate dignity, of such courtly manners, of such varied acquirements, had come to be cast aside and forgotten by the world, living almost a hermit's life among the lowliest and most illiterate.

Tempted by the old man's frankness, Courtenay recounted to him the sad incidents of his own life. If the good priest's sympathy had been excited before by griefs which he imagined, it was doubly enlisted now that Courtenay had confided to him their reality.

Henceforth, the relation between them was changed, and affection now prompted what their ages did not belie, a mutual reliance, as between father and son. The mountain's brow, the recesses of the pine wood, the lonely valley were now no longer sought by Courtenay as the most congenial haunts, because the most solitary; the fishing rod, which had been used in the hope of affording some distraction and occupation by the

foaming waterfall, was laid aside, and Sir Frederick might be seen, oftener than elsewhere, entering the lowly porch of the priest's house, or walking with him in his garden, or on the pathway to or from the little chapel on the hill.

By the few bookshelves in the parlour—by the beehives in the garden—by the humble altar, there came to the mourner consolations un hoped for, strange and startling inspirations.

Time passed on—time, which stops not beside the tearful, or the jocund—and the verdant meadows had yielded their crops, and the little patches of Indian corn had been cleared; winter was approaching—a premature winter—and there were apprehensions that, ere long, the hamlet might be cut off from communication with the high roads and nearest towns.

With a heavier heart than he had felt for months—for his heart had acquired a link which he never thought would have been possible—Courtenay bade adieu to all that had given him peace and comfort in that mountain retreat, the valleys, hills, forests, streamlets, the choice though

limited library, the garden, the chapel, and—saddest farewell of all—to the aged priest.

Sir Frederick returned to England, and went down to Lowick, and did his best to divert his mind from dwelling with what he feared might be a morbid appetite on his sorrow.

The management of his property afforded some occupation, though the thought would sometimes arise that he was now only the steward of another and of another's child.

Perhaps his greatest consolation was the remembrance of the last years of his altered wife. He thought of her many virtues, which seemed to have bloomed more vigorously in proportion as their growth had been so long checked, and he often dwelt on the words she had spoken, remembering how she had said to him, "Oh! Frederick, after I am gone, the time may be very short before we meet again. When I am no more, think of me, dearest, not merely as of your wife that has left you, but as one waiting to receive you, to welcome you again. For there is surely no impiety in believing that the affections

which have existed here will be hereafter intensified, though chastened. Let religion guide you, dearest; we have both tried to walk without her, and have failed miserably. Dearest Frederick, we shall joyfully, peacefully meet again."

Now, although the voice of the beloved teacher was stilled for ever, memory united with religion in their soothing influence upon the mourner's mind.

We learn in our schoolboy lessons, and simply believe the philosopher's assertion, that "there is no grief which the lapse of time does not diminish and soften." But the mere flow of days is powerless to heal; for time cannot, of itself, supply correctives of the past, or fresh springs of action for the future. Something more, then, was required for Courtenay, to make even

The fullness of his anguish, by degrees,
Wane to a meditative melancholy.

The Montagues had come for a day or two to Lowick. Harry was in Sir Frederick's study,

and, as I have especially noticed once before, a book lay open the table, to which his attention was drawn. This time it was a folio, and the characters bespoke a learned language.

“What work of bygone ages are you deep in, Fred?” asked Montague. “Let me see, *Ἰωαννου Του Χρυσοστομου Περι ιερωσυνης λογοι.*” Why, Fred, you will be quite an authority in patristic literature. But this treatise is not much in your way.”

“I quite understand your not thinking that it should be so. But this is not the first time I have read it. The old French priest whom I told you I met in the little village among the mountains, first pointed out its beauties to me. It proves that we need not go to Pagan literature for models of taste, and thought, and elegance, and language too. But I must not talk of my dry studies to you. Your profession must give you an ample supply, Harry. Come, let us go and find Mary and have a stroll.”

“Stop a minute,” said Montague: “I saw a curious communication this morning, which I

think clears up the mystery of Dermod O'Neill's murder. It can hardly be forged, I think, for the purpose of putting an end to further search or suspicion."

"That is, I suppose, a lawyer's doubt," observed Courtenay.

"Well, I do not think it is probable," resumed Montague, "for it bears the name of a respectable and credible person, who appends his address and the date of the attestation."

"But what is it, Harry? Never mind the arguments *pro* and *con*."

"It purports to be the confession of a man on his deathbed, and hisself-accusation of the murder of O'Neill. I will read it:—

'Being, as I believe, on the point of death, and having nothing to fear or hope from any one in this world, I am desirous of making this confession as some reparation of my crime, and especially to prevent the possibility of an innocent man suffering for the murder which I now declare I alone committed.

'I do expressly declare that I alone murdered

Mr. Dermod O'Neill, on the night of —, 18—, and that no other had act, hand, or part in the crime.

‘I declare that I was incited thereto by the remembrance of wrongs done by him to me and mine, for I had discovered that it was principally owing to him that my father (whose death it caused) and myself and family were turned out of our farm at Iveragh, and by an altercation which had taken place between us. For on the day before the murder, we met, and I reminded him of his injustice and cruelty, and told him that he had broken the heart of my poor father. High words passed between us, and he threatened to repeat his treatment of me, and have me ejected from my holding, for he said he knew my landlord, and would write to him and ask him to punish my insolence.

‘My blood was up; I secretly took a gun from a neighbour’s house, and I laid in wait for Mr. O’Neill in a bocheen about a mile from the house where I knew he was staying. There I fired upon him with the musket loaded with slugs, and

killed him on the spot, and then I sank the musket in a deep hole in the lake, behind the old ruins, where, for aught I know, it may still be.

‘I do declare, in the presence of the God before whom I shall shortly be judged, that this statement is in every particular true; and I give my full permission that this confession be published immediately after my death.

‘In sign whereof, I write my name, this —— day of ——, 18—.

‘JAMES McGRATH.’

‘I testify that the above statement was drawn up and read by me to the above-named James McGrath, and that the said James McGrath did thereto set his name in token of its entire truth.

‘THOMAS McNULTY, P P.,

‘—— County.’”

“There can be no doubt of its authenticity, Harry,” said Courtenay, “the attestation of the parish priest is sufficient.”

“I should think so,” replied Montague: “it would be easy enough to ascertain the existence of Mr. McNulty, and whether he attended McGrath.”

"Would it not be as well," suggested Courtenay, "to make assurance doubly sure, to ascertain if this gentleman is really living and a parish priest."

"Yes; I will write to day and make inquiries about him and the whole affair. By the way, Fred, I remember Dermod saying—perhaps I ought to say boasting—that he had taken revenge upon a young farmer of the name of McGrath for some impertinence to him in a dispute about the game on his father's property."

"Poor Dermod!" exclaimed Courtenay, musingly, "poor Dermod! His end was frightful. Thank God it was not caused by my bullet. It makes me shudder to think of that day."

"Poor fellow! indeed," said Montague: "how sad a life, how awful a death!"

"God forgive him as I do," said Sir Frederick, apparently following the train of his own thoughts. "They have both been judged ere this, the murderer and his victim. We may at least say, God have mercy on their souls."

CHAPTER XI.

"Solemn, with all the characters of venerable antiquity, are the avenues which traverse this part of life's vast forest. Here another road leads through the oldest part of the wood, recalling what is most majestic in past times, but it is still trodden by living feet, and on entering it we often meet unexpectedly with some of the very men from whom it derives its title."—COMPITUM.

I am all alone, and the visions that play
Round life's young days have passed away,
And the songs are hushed that gladness sings,
And the hopes that I cherish'd have made them wings,
And the light of my heart is dimm'd and gone,
And I sit in my sorrow and all alone."

T. K. HERVEY.

TWICE since Montague took up the Greek folio in Courtenay's study have the delicate light green leaves clothed with their mantle the beech woods at Lowick, and twice have the winter's

blasts swept over the inclined heads of those trees which scantily stud the sweeping hills of that Northern district, where lay the opening scene of my tale a long time ago.

To the large quadrangular building which then rang so cheerily with the laughing voice of the holiday bell and the shouts of the emancipated boys, I must beg my readers, in fancy, to transport themselves again.

The tower clock has chimed the hour preceding midnight. Silence reigns throughout that edifice, so hive-like at times, and full of life. Sleep, with leaden pinion, broods over that vast building, and, with mesmeric pass, has fanned to repose the bright eyes and unscathed hearts of its inmates. Sweet and placid and uncourted are the slumbers of the schoolboy, ere his mind knows the anxieties or his heart the throbs which attend his after career.

But there was one being in that house that slept not, neither had his limbs pressed his narrow hard bed that night.

Hush! a footstep soft and slow scares away

on the staircase landing the "wee sleekit, cow'ring, tim'rous mouse" that has ventured abroad in its huge world.

The moon, with her cold silvery light shines through the opposite window of the ambulacrum. A figure interposes; it is enveloped in a long black cassock, its pace is slow, its eyes are down-cast, and its form is drooping; its features are not those of age, but its hair is very grey. Reflection, deep, and solemn, and engrossing, seems to concentrate all its faculties within itself.

Whither goes it?

Sadly it moves through the long corridor, nor stops till it has reached the cloister leading to that church whose exterior formed one of the features of the earliest sketch in this book.

It pauses, and lifts its eyes to the calm sky, whose clear chaste orb has lighted its footsteps on their way. Those eyes are full and large, and blue, but oh! how melancholy. It is but for a moment that they are raised; then, as the cloister is entered, they are depressed with reverence.

The iron clasped oaken door opening directly into the church is encountered. Its hinges sound a little as it swings back. The figure passes through, and enters the church. It stretches forth its hand and touches the blessed water with its fingers—that hand so white, those fingers so very taper.

The sign of our salvation is made on the high pale forehead, which is bent lower than before with awe and homage.

The figure approaches the sanctuary, in which is suspended from the arched roof a silver lamp, whose dim and holy light sheds a struggling beam on the cunning carving and rich decorations of the altar. It enters not the chancel, but sinks slowly down upon its knees, and there remains wrapped either in profound contemplation or mental prayer, for its lips move not, nor do its arms crossed upon its breast, nor any part of its form more than that of a marble statue.

The tower clock has long chimed twelve, and, like the voice of the Muezzin from the minaret, calls again the young hours of the opening day.

Still that figure kneels, absorbed and tranced, save that once it has raised its eyes, and a smile—aye, a peaceful, gentle smile—has played for a time over its lips, as though it beheld the vision of some fair loving spirit and communed with it awhile, save too that now those lips move, and breathe forth this whispered prayer:—

“O thou, my Father and my God! Behold thy child and servant. Thou has stretched forth thy hand, and smitten me in thy justice. Those whom thou hast taken from me keep in thy loving kindness. As for me, may the sacrifice be complete, a holocaust before thy throne. Turn not thine eyes away from me, nor disdain the remnant of my days, but accept the unworthy offering of thine erring child in the humblest spirit of expiation and retribution.”

And the figure again bows low its head, and now it rises and returns the same way it has come.

The sun has risen high in the heavens. The passages and corridors of the college are thronged

with the students and the masters flocking into the cloister and the church.

Nave and aisle are filled, and within the chancel too are some with sacerdotal insignia upon them, and one who bears in his hand the pastoral staff, and on his head the jewelled mitre. There are others who range themselves side by side. They are mostly youthful, or rather in the first opening strength of manhood; all indeed save one, and he is the figure in the last night's scene; but his countenance bears now a calmer and yet a more determined expression, as though a struggle had been endured and had passed, and a resolve had been made and would be adhered to.

There is then a long and mysterious ceremony and over a low bent head, and a pale melancholy face, these words are slowly pronounced, and they go home to the heart that has borne the yoke of sin and sorrow, with a strange supernatural meaning, *Accipe jugum Domini, jugum enim ejus suave est, et onus ejus leve.*

It is over, and all has been concluded.

How magnificently grand then rolls forth the peal of the organ, in accompaniment of the universal melody with which the glorious song of Ambrose floats up to the very roof, from the lips of all who sing in one spirit of jubilation, *Te Deum laudamus, te Dominum confitemur.*

Sir Frederick Courtenay is a priest.

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The letter carrier, that unthinking

Messenger of grief

Perhaps to thousands, and of joy to some,
To him indifferent whether grief or joy,

had, in his accustomed round, stopped at Montague's door, and a packet of letters awaited him on the breakfast table.

"Here, Mary," said Montague, as she came into the room a few minutes after him, "is a letter which will interest you as much as it has me. Poor fellow! how strange and chequered has been his life! Shall I read it to you?"

"By all means: but first tell me whom it is from, Harry."

“ I thought I had told you; it is from Courtenay.”

“ Oh! poor Sir Frederick! I am so glad you have heard from him at last. How does he write?”

“ Sadly, I think, but calmly. But listen, and judge for yourself.”

Montague then read the following letter, which will serve as an illustration of Courtenay’s feelings a month or two after he entered on the active exercise of his novel duties as a priest.

“MY DEAR HARRY,—You must excuse my having allowed your last letter to lie unanswered till now, but I have had much to occupy me since my arrival in this town.

“ I am finally and comfortably settled in my present abode, and have been doing my best to accommodate my perverse nature to my novel situation.

“ You ask me how it suits me. A strange and dream-like existence it was at first. I seemed like one escaped from a tempestuous sea to an unknown shore, and from a cliff, contemplating

the stormy waters from which I had been delivered. I seemed to see the shattered hull of my wrecked bark, her rudder gone, her mast broken, her spars splintered. I looked in vain for the companions of my voyage; some had been struck down by the fallen mast, some had been washed overboard, some had been swallowed up in the vain attempt to cope with the whelming waves. I was alone. Even in the solitude of my chamber, shut out from the noise of this busy, bustling town, I still seemed to hear the roar of the waters that had come over my soul.

“But the strangeness of my position, and of my sensations, is gradually, though slowly, passing away, and I am becoming habituated, I trust, to my present life.

“I fain would look forward rather than back, but, Harry, the realities of the past are more impressive than the uncertainty of the future, and my pathway seems to be through a strange and unknown region, every object and turn of which is new.

“Still, I must not be discouraged. The step I have taken is an uncommon one I grant, but it has not been prompted, I trust, by aught of folly or fanaticism. I shall scarcely have had credit though for any other motive, and I dare say some of my acquaintances have been kind enough to proclaim this opinion of me pretty diligently.

“But I trust I may take credit to myself for honesty of purpose. Years of profitless time, Harry, must be accounted for, and ought to be redeemed. There are some who have a heavy reckoning against me. Body and soul, mind and health have been scored against me. Am I either foolish or fanatical if I hope that my endeavours to snatch or warn others from those ways where I dug myself pitfalls, may be placed as something towards a balance? How can I do this with better success than as I am.

“There was one consideration which made me pause, ere I took the final step: it even made me shudder. Every book I read but increased my hesitation. I was forced to attend, even to a

poet's warning, for there is truth in these lines

Mais l'ombre du passé ne doit jamais ternir
Le ministre du ciel; nul mortel souvenir,
Dans la piété de Dieu ne doit rappeler l'homme;
Du seul nom de pasteur il convient qu'on le nomme.

"Could I hope that the shadow of my early days would not cloud those that might yet be vouchsafed me? It is a melancholy remark of that unfortunate Shelley that 'all of us who are worth anything spend our manhood in unlearning the follies, or expiating the mistakes of our youth.' It is, perhaps, too sweeping a censure, and a better moralist has said more truly, '*la plupart des hommes emploient la première partie de leur vie à rendre l'autre misérable.*'"

"Forgive the egotism of this letter, Harry. Let me beg you often to write to me, and tell me how your charming wife and my little godson are.

"I need not ask you how your profession prospers. I have often thought how lucky it was that Muddlehead, and not you, got the appoint-

ment, the loss of which, was, at the time, such a disappointment to you.

“I am glad all is going on so well at Lowick; a few years careful nursing, and my system of depletion will have been corrected, and to carry on the simile, a healthier tone restored to the brave old property. Its constitution must have been a good one for it to have lasted so many hundred years, in spite of some severe attacks, and I fear few of its possessors have tried it more than myself.

“Give my kindest love to Freddy, and tell him I have not forgotten my promise of a pony when he is bigger; he shall have the handsomest Sheltie I can pick out of the droves, which, I am told, sometimes pass this way, and depend upon it, my knowledge of horseflesh—real or imaginary (no one ever owns himself a bad judge in this respect), will never have been exerted with more care and pleasure, than it will be in choosing a pony for your dear boy.

“Now, do write often, Harry, though, I fear

you must be content with an unequal return of correspondence. God bless you and yours, and believe me, dear Harry,

“Your affectionate friend,

“FREDERICK COURTENAY.”

There were tears in Mary Montague's eyes when her husband ceased to read; for a minute or two they were both silent.

“Well, Mary,” said Montague, “what do you think of our friend's letter?”

“I think,” replied the beautiful creature, with earnestness, looking up, with the bright tears overflowing her eyes, “that it is written by one of the noblest and the best of men.”

“Right, Mary, right!” exclaimed Montague; “there is many a less guilty man, with a far less generous spirit than Courtenay's, and a heart not half as noble as beats within his breast.”

“I am sure,” observed Mary, “that no one has a right to question his motives; I believe them to be most pure and upright.”

“And so do I,” continued Montague, “and yet I dare say, that he is not far from the truth in

saying that this noble devotion of his life, will be attributed by some to fanaticism and disappointment."

"By those only who have no generosity of feeling," interposed Mary.

"I have seen it remarked," resumed Harry, "with regard to your sex, however, that what the greater part of disappointed women take up with, is religion, wine, or opium."

"Complimentary to us," replied Mary; "it is a curious classification, too—religion, wine, or opium—to choose from. Those who prefer the two latter, will not, probably, be troubled with the first; the devotees will not clash. At all events, I do not think Sir Frederick need care much what his old associates may think about him."

"No: and as self interest is not a bad test to apply to men's actions and motions, no one can say that Courtenay has benefited in worldly position by the change."

"I should think not," said Mary; "the beautiful airy rooms at Lowick, with their oriels and

mullioned windows, the pictures—that heavenly virgin and child of Carlo Maratti, for instance; that splendid view down the avenue, those hills, the river, the delicious gardens, health, leisure—all sacrificed! And for what?”

“For toil,” answered Harry, seriously; “for the haunts of the miserable and depraved, the narrow street, the fetid lane, the close, damp alley, the noisome cellar, the dark, crowded, hot garret! God grant poor Fred’s health may not give way!”

“It is a noble sacrifice,” said Mary; “fanaticism indeed!”

“At least, it is a fanaticism which has precedents numerous and splendid enough to hallow and consecrate it,” rejoined Montague, “nor need we search the pages of the Bollandists for them; there are plenty better known, and more modern than those which they record.”

“Courtenay’s devotion seems to me,” said Mary, “more noble than the retirement of many we read of to solitude and silence.”

“I suppose you are thinking of Charles the

Fifth, in the monastery of St. Justus, or some instance of the exchange of a coronet for the cowl, or that of the gay Gerambe in La Trappe."

"I do not think Sir Frederick's sacrifice loses by the comparison," replied Mary; "let the world call it what it pleases—fanaticism if it likes."

"We must often write to him," said Montague. "I am sure it will give him great pleasure. Poor Fred!"

One of the large manufacturing towns in the north of England provided an ample field for Sir Frederick Courtenay's labours in his new vocation. To this place he had removed a short time before he wrote the letter to Montague, which I have inserted in the foregoing pages. His was now the life of hundreds of others whose previous career had, indeed, been less erring and erratic, but whose aim and duties were the same, a life unostentatious but unmasked, devoted to the humblest, yet the most noble ministration—

*"Partout, partout un peu de baume à la souffrance,
Aux corps quelque remède, aux âmes l'espérance*

Un secret au malade, aux partans un adieu,
Un soupir à chacun, à tous un mot de Dieu."

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Time wore on—some years passed away, and in the constant exercise of charity, benevolence, and zeal, Courtenay's life advanced.

It was not in the nature of things that he should ever recover even a semblance of his once high spirits. The tooth of grief had entered his heart too deeply for that, and there were moments when his sorrows came back with all their poignancy.

On many a night, when sleep forsook his pillow—ay, and in his dreaming hours too,—the form of his wife, such as she was in the last days of their love and union, would seem to come like a beautiful apparition, by his bed-side, her face made more lovely than ever with a spiritualized expression, as if borrowed from the essence of the pure creatures in whose company he believed her soul to dwell, but pale and grave, as though she sympathized calmly yet feelingly with him in their common grief; and sometimes

there appeared to be a sweet, soft, glad smile upon her countenance, and her lips seemed to move with words that bade him not to mourn too deeply, nor to fret because their Dugald lay not in hallowed ground, over which he could weep and be comforted, for that their dear boy's resting place was in her fond arms, and she had but left him for awhile to whisper to the mourner upon earth that she and their child were happy.

At another time, he would dream that he heard the booming of the waves and the roaring of the wind; but on a sudden the noise would cease, and his eyes would behold, spread out in limitless space, the clear blue waters of the sleeping ocean. On its soft, bright bosom glinted the fair beams of the joyous sun, and then from out that placid, sky-like surface would rise, radiant and smiling, his beauteous boy, not a curl of his glossy hair disordered, not a blue vein on his transparent brow raised from its white bed, his large dark eyes lustrous and intelligent, the bloom of health on his cheeks, his lips parted as if about to speak. Then the impulse of the

dream would make the sleeping father rise, with arms extended, to fold to his breast his regained treasure, and he would wake to find that he had grasped but the unsubstantial darkness, and the impalpable air.

But Sir Frederick Courtenay's mourning, though ever dark and full, was chastened and subdued, and though the waters of sorrow still flowed over his soul, they came with strong and deep, but no longer with tumultuous force.

CHAPTER XII.

And the maiden so fair—Oh! what a change has come there!
She is wandering still and she wanders alone;
But her cheek has grown white, and her eye lost its light,
And the dove from her breast with its olive has flown.

ELIZA COOK.

On my wan cheek the colour dies;
Suffused and languid roll mine eyes;
Cold horrors thrill each sickening vein;
Deep broken sighs my bosom strain.

BLACKLOCK.

TEN of the twelve satellites which ever move in a ceaseless cycle before the throne of their monarch, Time, onwards into the caverns of the past, have been dismissed from their attendance upon him; and once again has been heard the summons for congratulation which Sir Frederick

Courtenay had listened to but the day before his beautiful boy joined the happy spirits, to rejoice for whom the call had been given.

Yet in some of the large towns in England there was but a hasty performance of the usual solemn service, for the sword of pestilence had been waved over the land, and many both of the shepherds and of their flocks had fallen beneath it.

In that town in which Courtenay lived and laboured, the disorder had been particularly fatal, and in some of the poorer districts there were indications of it almost similar to those recorded in the pages of Thucydides and Defoe.

It was in the narrow lanes and crowded courts, peopled chiefly by some of that unhappy nation which appears especially to feel the decimating hand of famine or fever, that it raged with the greatest violence.

There might be seen, in one part, by day, groups of squalid and tattered women or knots of men of worn countenance and slovenly dress, talking, panic stricken, of the seizure of some rela-

tion, neighbour, or acquaintance; in another part might be heard the wailing of the bereaved and the wild droning sound of the coronach; here might be observed a priest hurrying into the atmosphere of contagion to administer the consolation of religion to the dying, there a corpse, carried out in its rude deal coffin, while at night the flickering glare of the burning pitch barrels shone with a ghastly and warning light.

For some weeks, the fever—the very worst description of typhus—raged with almost plague-like fury. Some of the medical men, and not a few of the ministers of religion fell victims to their charity; and their works of mercy may be said to have merited for them in death the palm of the martyr.

Courtenay shrank not from danger, but took almost more than his share of visiting the infected. He sat by the bedsides of numbers of the poorest, he closed the eyes of more than one of those who had been suddenly arrested in the performance of the sacred duties and toils which now devolved upon him and the rest of his comrades who were

still spared, but no fear of his own life ever crossed his mind, and, like some, who in the heat of the battle's strife seem to bear a charmed existence, the shafts of death flew thick and close around him, but touched him not. Some of his fellow labourers had sunk beneath them, some had been stricken but not to death, some were exhausted and worn out with incessant labour and want of sleep, and among these last Courtenay began to feel himself numbered.

The sun had almost run his daily shortening race, and the evening was approaching fast, and with that peculiar vacuity and stillness of the air, which, even in a crowded city, marks the waning of the year.

A female passed from out one of the quarters of the town where none but the poorest dwelt, and where too herded many of the sinned against and sinning, the outcasts of society.

She was tall, and tho' many years—it might be chequered ones—had passed over her dark face, they had not obliterated the lines of majestic beauty that yet lingered upon it. Her com-

plexion might almost be termed swarthy; her black eyes, though they may be somewhat sunken, still beamed brightly, but her hair, which had evidently once rivalled the raven's wing in its lustrous hue, was tinged with grey.

Her dress was travel-stained, and the dust was on her feet. She walked along, apparently without much object, but she seemed to avoid the gaze of the passers by. She did not appear to be familiar with the town, for, once or twice, she entered a small court or square, from which there was no outlet, and yet she did not address herself to any one for information.

It might have been chance—though, in place of that unmeaning word, I would fain substitute one of deeper import, for chance is as powerless in the events of this world as would have been a fortuitous concussion of atoms in its formation—that directed her footsteps past an edifice whose freshness proclaimed it to be of modern workmanship, but whose outline and details proved it to be a copy from an ancient model. On the apex of the gable was a floristed cross, and

beneath the deeply cut western arch the iron-bound door stood ajar.

An irresistible impulse drew the woman towards it. She pushed the door, and massive though it was, it yielded easily to her hand, and swung back upon its hinges.

The slanting beams of the setting sun shone through the stained and storied window beneath which she had entered; the incense which had been burnt within the church still yielded a grateful perfume, and the silence of the columned nave and aisles contrasted with the harsh clash of the iron armed hoofs of the mighty horses and the roll of the ponderous waggons on the rough pavement without.

The woman looked cautiously round with an expression of surprise and awe. There was not a living being to be seen within the edifice. She stole round the wall shrinking from the sound of her own footfall, and treading yet lightly as she advanced. In the silent aisle beside one of the massive pillars the shaft of

which shot up high to support the wide arch, she dropped down upon her knees.

It might be from emotion, it might be from weakness or a coming illness, but her limbs felt unable to support her, and unconsciously, she assumed the attitude of that master-piece of Canova's chisel, the dying Magdalen.

When that woman last knelt within the walls of a church, her hair was black and her hands soft and round—and her soul—Oh! that had not been steeped in sin—and who was beside her?—her mother. Within the dark chamber of her mind were reflected the events of many years which had intervened, and which she would gladly have blotted from her memory, but they clung to it in tenacious characters. She saw them as may be observed the picture in a *camera obscura*; and a small, but clear voice within her—the voice of conscience—that had been long stilled, told her that those characters were written in a book of fearful records, and that not one of the dark accusing entries, registered therein for

expiation or for judgment, had been effaced. It was a thought that made her shudder and her very flesh creep, and it overwhelmed her mind with a crushing weight.

How long she thus remained she took no heed. She was roused by a hand upon her shoulder. It was the sacristan's who came to close the door for the night, and who had observed her as he passed along the aisle. With a start, she raised herself upon her feet. There was something so wild about her eyes, and her cheek was so pale and wan that the man asked her if she was ill. She hastily replied "No, no," and the feeling that she had been discovered where she might have no right to be, an unwillingness to be interrogated, and a sense of the strangeness of the place lent her strength, and she hurried out of the church.

The lamps had been lighted in the streets, and their glare dazzled her eyes as she came out of the darkness. She felt bewildered, and was on the point of turning back and inquiring her way of the sacristan, but the feelings which had

before hurried her from him closed her lips, and when she took courage and turned round to address him, she heard the massive door shut and the bolt drawn on the inside. She knew not, in order to reach her lodging whether to turn to the right or the left. She tried to remember which way she had come, and went along that street by which she thought she had reached the church, but, after walking the entire length of it she found that she was wrong.

She remembered the name of the lane in which she lodged, and asked her way to it. The first person she applied to declared himself quite unable to inform her, the second, with a leer, bade her ask some of her own sort to go along with her.

She wandered about for some time. The streets were less crowded, for the business and bustle of the day were over. The confused wayfarer felt sick and faint, and a mist gathered over her eyes, and a fiery heat burned within her brain. She sat down on the step of a door way, and pressed her hands to her throbbing temples,

but, ere long, a rough hand was laid upon her, and the gruff voice of a policeman asked her what she was doing there.

"I seek my way to my lodgings," she replied.

"A rum way of doing it," was the observation; "you'll be a long time finding them at this pace. Come, you must move on."

"Can you," she said, "direct me to——?"

"I'll engage you know the way as well as I do."

"I do not indeed," she replied, "for I reached this town only this very day, and I am a stranger here."

"And the sooner you take yourself out of it, the better; there are plenty of such as you in it already."

Perhaps the man saw an angry flush pass like lightning's glow across her wan face, for he added, "However, if that be the case, you have only to take the second turning to the right and that will bring you directly to where you want to go." The policeman then moved on a few

steps, and then stopped and turned round to see if the woman had departed.

She was already gone. Though the direction which was plain and simple, the streets were very long, and weary and faint she was when she reached the lane which she sought. She passed on to the threshold of her lodging.

It was in one of those houses appropriated to the permanent or temporary accommodation of the poor and houseless.

The cupidity of the proprietor or lessee not unfrequently crowds these with inmates till some flagrant case of the open violation of all decorum, or the visitation of some pestilential disorder draws attention to them; their state of filth and the herds of the half savage beings they contain are disclosed to the public eye, and then for awhile, people understand and shudder at the dwellings and houses of the poor.

This was, however, not one of the worst description—bad though it was—and too small to form such an infectious sink of moral and phy-

sical impurity as exists in some of those labyrinths of rooms, which few besides their inmates ever explore. Like most of them, however, it was situated, not only amidst the dwellings of the poorest and most squalid, but also of the most vicious, for there is an unhappy union between vice and dirt, although it is a truth which is wont to be too often disregarded.

As she whom we have accompanied so far entered the doorway, the woman who owned or rented the entire house came out of a room to see who it was that was passing in. She was old and decrepid, bent with years and rheumatism, and her skinny, shrivelled hand held a short stick, on which she leant. She must have been close to the door of her room, for no sooner did her lodger enter the house than she opened it and peered forth, holding out a candle in her shaking hand. Her face was wrinkled, and withered, and bloodless, but in her bleared yet still keen eyes, there was an unmistakeable expression of the most sordid avarice, of grovelling suspicion, and miserable cunning.

She thrust the unsteady light forward, almost into the face of the woman who entered, but merely said, with a croaking, husky voice: "Ugh; that's you, is it? I thought you weren't for coming back. I wonder what's been the use of your journey to —— Street?"

She received no answer, and went into the room from which she had emerged.

The staircase was very narrow and steep, and it was an effort for her whom we have seen enter the house to reach the summit, where she had hired a wretched room. As soon as she had come within it, she sank down on the pallet, and strove to collect her scattered thoughts, for her very reason seemed to be leaving her.

She laid her head on the rough pillow, and closed her eyes; a cold perspiration broke out, and, for the instant, relieved the burning and throbbing of her aching head. But it was succeeded almost immediately by a shivering, and the pain in her head was redoubled. All things seemed obscured and moving round, and their reality altogether vanished.

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One day has elapsed. The night is approaching. The woman still lies upon the pallet in that wretched room. "O God!" she exclaims, with anguish and terror, "O God! that I should die thus!"

A wild fear has seized upon her, and she almost shrieks as the thought of a future, thunder-like, smites her soul.

That fear gives her energy. She rises, and though she staggers as she crosses the room, she struggles down stairs. She taps at the door from which the woman of the house had looked when she entered.

"Well, and what may your pleasure be?" says the old hag, opening the door. "You've been quiet enough up stairs all day."

"I have been ill; I am ill—dying perhaps. I am wretched, miserable, despairing. I wish to see a priest and a doctor."

"A what and a doctor?" exclaimed the old hag, raising her discordant voice.

"A priest, a Catholic priest," at length, she

murmured, "I remember the religion my mother taught me."

"And who's to go for him?"

"Will you go? I came to ask you: I know no one else?"

"Me go! A pretty joke. And who's to mind the house when I'm away? May be you think a golden sovereign would be safe left lying on the staircase here—eh?"

"I pray you, then, as you hope for mercy, send some one, for I am ill, very ill."

"And what good will the priest do you? If you're to have any one, have a doctor. There's none lives about here though."

"I would gladly have a doctor also. Can you get somebody to go for me?"

"Sally's out, and she'll not be in just yet, There's none of the neighbours that will fancy turning out now; you'll not find anyone to go your errands just for the purpose of obliging you, besides it's raining."

"If no one will go except for money, I have

a trifle left. I will give it to any messenger you can get."

"Well," says the hag, turning up the shrivelled palm of her shaking hand, "give me the money, and I'll see what can be done when Sally comes in. There's no such hurry."

"Take the money, it is all I have in the world. Forpity's sake, do what I have asked you."

"What a row you do make! Sally'll be in presently: I'll see about it then."

There was no alternative, and the sick woman crawled back to the garret. Standing on the draughty staircase had made her shiver with cold, though her head and face were burning. Every instant she felt that her illness was increasing. She crept back to the wretched bed, and once more lay down upon it.

There those agonies of horror and fear came back into her soul.

She thought how she had cast off her innocence, how she had turned from her God, and how he had deserted her; and though she had trembled with intense and despairing pangs, her soul was

as a dry and arid waste, and the waters of love and sorrow flowed not to moisten its parched surface.

She had remained thus for the space of half-an-hour or more when the door opened, and a vulgar girl, coarse-looking, came in. Her face was flushed and her breath might have told whence her heightened colour was derived.

She was niece to the old woman who lived in the room down stairs, who had taken her to live in the house, thinking to make her useful in looking after her lodgers—one of God's own creatures, yet one who hardly knew of His existence, or that she possessed an immortal soul; one nurtured in the hot bed of vice, in an atmosphere reeking with the infectious exhalations of every crime.

"So you want some one to go out on an errand for you," said she.

"I should be truly thankful to you if you would do so," replied the sick woman.

"Well, I don't say I wouldn't do a good natured thing, though it rains, and it is not a pleasant night to turn out in."

"I am ill, and I wish to see a priest, and a doctor."

"Well, I might find both for you; but I tell you what, I went once for nothing when Bet Smith in the next house was taken ill of the cholera, and that's what I won't do again."

"I told the woman down stairs I would give all the money I had to any messenger she could get. I gave it to her, all I possessed."

"Bah! don't try for to catch old birds with chaff, you've got more than that I engage."

"I have not indeed."

"Well, you're not so green as to think the old woman will give it to me. She may give me sixpence or a shilling at most. It's a mile or more, and it's raining, and I'm not going to spoil my clothes for that I promise you."

"I have no more money I assure you. Do go, for pity's sake, go."

"What's that you've got on your finger? Come, it's no use hiding of it."

"It is only a ring. Indeed I have no money."

“Well, then, I’ll go if you promise to let me have the ring. Lor! how it rains.”

“If nothing less will satisfy you, I will give it to you when you have brought the priest, the ring shall be yours; it must be,” said the sick woman with a sigh, while her eyes filled with tears.

“Hallo! I suppose it’s a gift from a sweetheart. Well, that’s a bagain, eh?”

“Go, for pity’s sake, go.”

“I’m off, mind, it’s a bargain.”

CHAPTER XIII.

“ Such is my name, and such my tale,
Confession to thy secret ear,
I breathe the sorrows I bewail,
And thank thee for thy generous tear
This glazing eye could never shed.
Then lay me with the humblest dead,
And, save the cross above my head,
Be neither name nor emblem spread.”

BYRON.

“ Je l'ai frappé de mon soufflé empesté.”

BARBERI.

A LAMP was burning dimly in Sir Frederick Courtenay's room. He had not yet raised the flame, for he had but that moment entered, and it cast a faint struggling light around.

The room was small, very different from the cheerful, spacious apartment at Lowick, and the

furniture which it contained was plain and ordinary. A book-case formed the chief feature in it, and occupied one entire side: on the table were scattered a number of volumes, letters, and writing materials.

In the grate there was the remnant of a fire, but a few cinders alone retained any signs of heat.

Courtenay drew off a heavy coat, which he hung on the back of a chair, for it was wet, and then he endeavoured to stir the embers into activity. But they possessed so little vitality that the act extinguished the few sparks that had remained. With a shiver, Sir Frederick desisted. He then increased the light of the lamp, and, taking up a volume, continued for about half an hour engaged in reading.

Then he laid the book down, and rested his arm on the table and his forehead on his hand. It was the action of a person wearied, and perhaps harassed mentally as well as fatigued bodily. His appearance would confirm this surmise, for he was thinner and paler than he

usually was, and beneath his eyes, which looked heavy and wan, there was a dark rim.

It was late: the streets were quiet: all within the house had retired to rest, still Courtenay did not go to his sleeping room.

There were some letters on the table before him: he took up two or three and looked them over. One was from his friend Montague, and, it, with other information, announced that the offer of a silk gown had been made him. It was written in high spirits, for his wife and his children were well; he had succeeded in his profession beyond his most sanguine hopes; every thing seemed to be prospering with him.

Sir Frederick read the letter to the end, and then, with a sigh, and, it seemed too, with an effort, he drew his chair round to the table, and began to write the following letter:—

“MY DEAR HARRY,

“I will not allow even one day to pass without writing to wish you joy on the honour which you tell me awaits you. No one, believe me, of your friends does so more heartily than myself,

and I would not be one of the most tardy in the expression of my congratulation, although I have claims enough upon my time to supply me with a sufficient excuse for any delay. For, as you may have heard, we have been for some weeks, and are still, suffering in this populous and overcrowded town from the visitation of a fearful fever. My days, and nights, too, are so completely and painfully occupied in attending on the sick that I might have an ample plea for neglecting to write even to my oldest and best friend.

“ Even now I dare snatch only a few minutes from the rest which I dare not forego, for it is the only preparation I can have for the renewed toils of the morrow—to assure you that my thoughts have been sometimes with you and yours, in the midst of the most anxious and distressing labours.

“ I have only just returned from my round in a district where, this appalling disease is revelling in its ravages among the poor and ill-fed, and the scenes I constantly witness are too

sad and dreadful not to bear with them a depressing and lasting influence. How little do men know generally of the misery of the poor? I wish I could have had one or two of my old reckless companions by my side this evening. Such scenes are better than pulpit sermons.

“Do you remember, Harry, the inscription on the old sun-dial at Lowick?—

“*Minuta sunt quæ spectes non quæ pades.*”

How we pass by unheedingly each warning voice and index, till some tongue, too loud and stern not to be heard, at last arouses our fears. Of this I see instances every day.

“As for myself, I seem (how often I have to ask you to forgive my egotism! but my occupations are forcible monitors of self as well as of others) to have come to a time when the future no longer appears through a distant and indistinct vista, through which are reflected the misty visions of fancy, a picture, a dissolving view which looks any form which hope and ardent

confidence and brave resolve suggest; the play seems drawing to an end, the panorama rolling off the stage. Perhaps to such an one it would be more natural to look back than forward, to cling to memory rather than hope. Alas! Harry, I have the old dial before me and its inscription, and the question arises how in short days to redeem the lost time of long years.

“But I grow melancholy, and my letter has taken its tone from my depression: but to despond is to fail, for, depend upon it, courage is the fulcrum—the *Πόν στω*—by which each one may raise his own little world. You found it so, Harry.

“Well, I should be glad to see you lift your fortunes still higher. And yet, why should you? Why will you not take possession of Lowick at once, and let your noble boy grow up among the woods and fields that will be his? Ah! you will wait till you can retire with all the honours of your profession within your reach, enjoyed, perhaps, for a little while, and then laid aside, as a prize, once grasped, often pleases no longer. It

is rather a cynic's principle. At least, you know you have the option—Lowick or the courts, ease or labour: choose which, or as much of either as you like.

“As my thoughts wander to the dear old place, this time of the year associates with them memories sad, sad indeed. You, too, in the midst of your engrossing avocations, and the joys of your happy home, do not forget them, I am sure, and sometimes revert to those two tablets in the old church, which record the double wreck of my dearest hopes and affections. But I must not yield to a depression which quite unnerves me.

“When this fearful scourge has passed by, I think of leaving this town for awhile, and I should like to spend a few weeks again at Lowick with you. This incessant labour is beginning to tell upon me, and I feel I must recruit my strength. Will you, then, Harry, come to Lowick, and bring with you Mary and my namesake, and his pretty sister. We will once again rehearse the sweet days of our early friend-

ship. How the thought rejoices me! More than I ever did before, do I look forward to the pleasure of meeting you and yours. It will revivify me, it will—I hear the night bell: some poor wretch, no doubt stricken with fever and fear, thinks, at last, that there is another world besides this. It is well I had not gone to rest. God bless you, Harry.

“Ever yours,

“FREDERICK COURTENAY.

“It is, as I thought, a fever call. I must not delay.”

Courtenay did not stop to fold or seal the letter, but merely shut up the portfolio on which he had written it, and hastened to obey the summons, and dare again the breath of pestilence.

There were years of torturing retribution, and of bitter expiation crowded into the short hour that intervened between the departure and return of the girl whom the fever-stricken woman had bribed to do her errand, and slowly indeed the minutes passed as each of them brought

throbs of wilder pain and more hopeless thought into her hot bursting brain.

A strange messenger, indeed, was that girl; she was the same whose ring at the house bell had interrupted Sir Frederick, and made him hastily conclude his letter. It was the lost sheep itself going to seek for help for the erring one in the wilderness—vice employed in the service of mercy and grace.

The girl had pulled the night bell with violence, and she had not to repeat the peal before Courtenay himself accosted her, and ascertained the object of the call, and the district which he had to visit.

Although he knew the general locality of the place which she mentioned, he was ignorant of the lane, and, of course, of the particular house in it which she indicated, and he therefore bade her wait a few minutes to conduct him to it.

She had not to wait long, and Courtenay, preceded by his not very reputable guide, hastened along the streets.

The night was very dark, and the rain continued to fall. It had, however, now become drizzling, though thick and penetrating; the air was heavy and unwholesome, and likely to foster rather than check the spreading of the fever.

As they left the great thoroughfares of the town the streets became less efficiently lighted, and when they entered the lane, the two or three lamps in it, were quite insufficient to direct them. The lane was squalid and filthy in the extreme, with frequent holes in the road, which the heavy rains had filled with water. Courtenay was therefore obliged to slacken his steps, and take care as to where he was treading. As they advanced farther down the lane, the dirt increased; decayed vegetables, rags, and offal, were strewed about—the very food and fattening of fever. A lean, gaunt dog was regaling himself on a heap, and growled as they passed by.

The smell from a choked up sewer or drain was sickening, as they stopped before the house, to the door of which the girl applied a key.

The stench was even worse and more oppressive after they entered, concentrated as it was in the closed house. No wonder, thought Courtenay, that there is fever here. I wish, too, he said to himself, I had left word where I was gone, for there may be other cases of fever this close, damp night.

"This way," said the girl; "she's at the top of the stairs. You'll want a glim, I suppose."

"I must have a candle, if you please."

Courtenay followed her as she led the way up the creaking staircase; it was steep and narrow, and low, and more than once he struck his hat against the ceiling above.

"Now then," said the girl to the suffering being, who lay flushed, but exhausted, on the coarse pallet, "here's the priest; that's my part of the bargain. Now give me the ring—that's yours."

"Will that alone satisfy you," asked the sick woman.

"Isn't a bargain a bargain?" said the other, in reply.

The ring slipped easily off the sick woman's finger, but she whose hand it now left for ever, pressed it to her lips before resigning it into the coarse hand that was now held out to take it, but a doubt struck her; "You are a priest, Sir?" she asked.

"I am. You had better withdraw," said Courtenay to the girl, who was delaying by the bedside.

To give up the ring was evidently at the cost of a great struggle. "Take it," said the woman at last.

"All right," replied the girl, seizing it. "A bargain's a bargain all the world over, you know: all right. I'm off."

As the girl was leaving the room, the priest took the dirty, greasy, blackened candlestick from her, and placed it on the ground—table there was none—at a little distance from the bed. Its flaring and smoking flame dimly revealed the wild face of the sufferer.

"May God be thanked," she exclaimed, "that you have come at last. I thought I should have

died, and died in despair. I thought that I should have lost my mind—I believe I did so yesterday—that I was becoming delirious, and that in that state I should die.”

“Calm yourself,” said the priest; “God has averted the evil which you feared. He has mercifully given you time. Do not lose that time.”

He speaks to her of the goodness of God, and urges her to make her peace with the great Being whom she has offended. He tells her that the Almighty “wills not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live;” that “he is long-suffering and plenteous in mercy.”

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The priest’s words fall like oil upon the troubled waters, like the soft summer shower upon the hot — parched, gaping earth.

The woman covers her face with her hands.

Again he speaks words of comfort, of encouragement, of hope.

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The rock of her heart hath been smitten, the

waters of repentance are moved in their hard bed, and they gush forth in words of sorrow.

She relates the sad and sinful history of her erring life. It differs little from the sorrowful tale, which, more than once during the visitation of the appalling pestilence, had been whispered by lips about to be closed for ever, into the ears of the minister of God. Her voice becomes weaker. He leans forward and bends his head to catch the words that proceed with difficulty from her lips. There must be danger in the act, infection on that tainted breath, fever as well as the records of crime imparted in those words.

It is a long and painful narration, an account of affection misplaced—of counsel shunned—filial duties slighted—of feelings unschooled—of passions unrepressed—of virtue forsaken—of religion abandoned—of innocence wrecked—of crime cherished—an awful catalogue, and yet, how common!

“My God!” she exclaims, “I never knew till now how deeply dyed, how steeped in iniquity my soul has been.”

“ ‘Though thy sins are red as scarlet I will make them white as snow,’ are words spoken to the sinner,” the priest replies.

He remains by the bedside long and watchfully—listening, prompting, admonishing, encouraging.

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She has raised herself in a sitting posture upon the bed—her hands are joined before her—her head is bowed, and the priest pronounces over her mysterious, solemn, wonderful words.

The effort was great and fatiguing to her, and she, presently, sank back, bathed in tears—but they were the sweetest tears she had ever shed, they were the tears of repentance, of joy, and of gratitude.

As she again pressed her pillow the action displaced something that was under it which fell, with a slight noise, upon the ground.

The priest was still sitting beside the bed, and stooped to pick it up what had fallen.

The light of the candle was thrown directly upon it, and its dull dim ray received a bril-

liancy from the reflection which he saw was from a bright golden object. He took it up, and perceived that it was a bracelet. "Great God of Heaven!" exclaimed the priest, as he sank back upon his chair, wonder-stricken and aghast; for the bracelet which he now held in his hand, was one which, years before, he himself had given to a being he had wronged, a lure to the snare of the destroyer, a pledge of that which is never realized: and as he who sat there in that wretched garret, tempting death, and courting infection, was Sir Frederick Courtenay, so, through the mask of time, and the harrying waste of misery, and poverty, and guilt, and sickness, he recognized the traces of the features of the youth, and the innocence, the health, and the happiness of Beatrice Werther — *la belle Indienne*.

There indeed, on that coarse pallet, in that unwholesome garret, in the midst, beneath the very roof of brutish vice, lay the wreck of that beautiful creature. On her, as on him who sat beside her, had surely fallen the hand of the

Avenger, and from her as from him had retribution been rigorously exacted.

She heard the bracelet fall, and the exclamation of surprise that had unguardedly escaped from the lips of the priest. It roused her from the prostration into which she had sunk. The wonder-stricken countenance of the priest, and the bracelet which he held in his hand, suggested an association of ideas which brought the truth to her mind.

“Oh! Sir Frederick Courtenay!” she exclaimed—almost screamed—starting up, “is it thus we meet? Can this be true, or am I dreaming, mad, delirious?”

She passed her hands over her face as though to dispel the mists of doubt and bewilderment which had gathered over her faculties, and threw back her long tresses, which had fallen forward.

“Are you really Sir Frederick Courtenay?” she asked in a solemn, yet an urgent, anxious tone.

“I am indeed that wretched man,” was the reply.

"And a priest?" she again exclaimed, with an accent of the utmost amazement, almost of doubt.

"I am—unworthily. Have no fear, no doubt, on that score. God has dealt strangely with us," he added, falteringly.

Sir Frederick Courtenay's face had become of an ashey paleness. The wonderful recognition had well nigh deprived him of speech, almost of consciousness; fatigue, long watching, and this discovery had bereft him of all energy, and he felt faint.

But she, whose spirit was hovering on the verge of eternity, seemed to bear up with stronger nerve, and the once ever-beaming brilliancy of her dark eyes returned, as, with hands clasped and lips apart, she concentrated their gaze on the changed man beside her, as though striving to realise the features that time, and grief more than time, had been so busy with.

"I will return," said Sir Frederick faintly, as he rose from his chair, "I will return in the morning."

“The morning may never dawn for me,” she replied. “Stay, Sir Frederick, stay but for a while. In mercy stay, I dread to be left here alone.”

Courtenay sat down again on the chair from which he had risen.

“Hear me,” she said, in slow and distinct tones, “hear me, Sir Frederick Courtenay, while I humbly, abjectly crave your pardon, as I have entreated, and do still entreat, forgiveness from my God.”

“My pardon!” he exclaimed. “It is I, the destroyer, it is I who have to ask, not to grant forgiveness.”

Then, as he sank down on his knees beside the pallet of that frail woman—the priest at the feet of the penitent, the judge beneath the criminal—he exclaimed, “Forgive me, you whose sins are upon my head, as is and ever has been your mother’s curse, pardon him who blasted your innocence, who wrecked your hopes, who ruined your lifetime, who drove your mother to ——” but his voice faltered and failed; he

could not speak, but bowed down his head in silent anguish.

“O! rise,” she said, earnestly, “and may God forgive me as I do you.”

She laid her hand upon his arm, and strove to express by the act, and an attempt to raise it, how distressed she was to see him in that position.

“I would fain,” she continued, after awhile, “speak to you of the past.”

“No, no,” replied Courtenay, “think no more—except to grieve for them—of days that are gone by, of acts which you cannot recall. Fix your mind on the future. Let no worldly thought win you back from heaven to earth.”

“But I would not die here,” she said, shuddering, “it is a dreadful place.”

“You shall be moved to morrow, if possible.”

“If—if,” she repeated, musingly. “True, it matters little what becomes of the vial when the essence has departed. Will you take this, Sir Frederick,” she added in a different tone, placing in his hands the bracelet which he had laid down

on the bed, "it is costly, precious in itself, as it has been for other reasons, but it is not safe here—the ring—the opal ring, you may remember it, I gave it to that creature who brought you here, she would not take a less bribe to seek you. To part with it at least proved my sincerity, my anxiety to pledge my sorrow for the past, my resolution, if time should be vouchsafed me, to seek the means of amendment and expiation. It cost me much to let it go, for it reminded me of happier days."

"Call them not now happy. And better would it have been had you never thought of me again."

"If I had not thought of you, Sir Frederick, your house would have been plundered, you yourself might have been murdered."

"Murdered! what do you mean?"

"Do you remember a letter you received the day before Lowick was broken into?"

"Perfectly."

"I wrote that warning letter, for I could not listen to what might end in the murder of one

I —— in your murder, and not try to prevent it.”

“Why did you not sign it? I should then have known to whom I was so much indebted. I might have proved my gratitude, and it might have been better for you.”

“I did not dare to do so. Those whom I betrayed would have thought no revenge too deep. Yet it was not my danger that I thought of most, it was shame that prevented me—shame that you should know that I had fallen so low—that I had become the associate of thieves and felons—and eaten the bread their base, vile hands had stolen. What a fall had my pride experienced? I who had spurned the wages of honest industry. I who—oh! I know not how I lived through that dreadful time. I know not how I have dragged my existence through all these long years.”

“Compose yourself,” said Sir Frederick; for the sick woman’s agitation had increased, and she had covered her face with her hands, while the veins were swollen on her flushed temples,

and she swayed herself backwards and forwards. "Say no more, remember your danger, death hovers over you; think not of this world."

"I must speak: it gives me relief. Hear me, Sir Frederick," she said, with a voice stronger and firmer, and a tone which seemed to contain a command, "hear me. I would not that you should think me worse than I have been. God knows that I have been guilty enough, but I have not always been the sport of vice. When I wrote that letter to you, I herded with the vilest, the most depraved of mankind. I was, however, compelled to do so, for I was married—ay, lawfully, legally married—ha! ha!" She burst out into a wild, hysterical laugh, but it was over in an instant, and she continued, with more composure, and yet with great feeling and emotion: "I was passed over—oh! how I was humbled!—I was passed over like a cast off garment from master to servant—Mr. Sinclair's. For the sake of my babe, that sleeps beneath the blue sky of Italy, that he might never bear the brand of shame and infamy, I plighted my troth and love

to a man I could have spurned with my foot: at another time I would have died rather than call him my husband. He, Mr. Sinclair—oh! how generous—prevailed on his servant for a sum of money to take the crushed broken flower, and make me his wife. I buried his child one day when he was scattering love tokens and bonbons at the carnival. I have never seen him since. I knew my husband was a rogue. He did again what he had often done before—he robbed his master. The theft was this time discovered. Mr. Sinclair did not care to prosecute him; he simply turned him out of the house, and started that day for Egypt, without so much as bidding me farewell—I, who for him, the false, the selfish, the profligate, had left——”

“Hush, hush,” said Sir Frederick.

“Well, well, it is past. My—my husband took me with him to England, for he became valet to a gentleman returning from Italy, who made no inquiries about his character, but who soon parted with him. He obtained place after place, which he no sooner obtained than he lost.

He became at last a professed thief—a burglar. But he was not one of those who attempted to break into your house, for he was at that time in gaol, awaiting his trial for a robbery, which was not, however, brought home to him. And yet,” she added, with a hysterical laugh, “justice was only baulked for a time: last month he left England for ever—transported for life. I was that man’s wife. You may guess now how I knew that your house was to be broken into, and among whom I was living.”

“And I,” groaned Sir Frederick, “was the first link in the chain of your misery and crime of all these years.”

“One word more. I was now alone; and I vowed I would return no more to that den of devils in human form, where I with him had lived and lurked. I knew that I once, at least, had relatives in this town. I resolved to seek them; I would humble myself before them; I would pray that, at length, I might earn a pittance honestly. I reached this town yesterday. I sought the poorest part for a lodging for a

night or two—I hoped it would not be for more—so it mattered little where or what it was. I was directed to this lane, to this house, but though I—Heaven forgive me—was familiar enough with vice and crime, I would fain have rested in a respectable lodging, and I dreamt not of dying, it may be, in the midst of the vilest and the most guilty. You know the rest.”

Such, briefly, was the narrative which the sick woman had persisted in continuing. But during it she exhibited many alternations and changes of manner, voice, and appearance. Indeed, as each fresh memory came uppermost in her mind, at each detail, or even thought—for there were a hundred thoughts in her seething brain for one that found utterance from her lips—her emotions took a varied form, and the excitement seemed to give her strength, and to overpower the disease which had attacked her.

But as each successive record of guilt, and crime, and wretchedness fell from her lips on to the ears and heart of the listener, he felt how all might be traced to that one first sin of which he

had been the prompter and the principal, and he felt stunned and sickened. Yet he sat there, not merely as a man, but as one invested with a high and holy office; and he strove to conquer the feelings of the man, that he might not forget the functions of the priest.

When she had concluded the recital, Courtenay saw that he was still holding in his hand the object which had prompted it, the bracelet which he had mechanically taken from her when she had offered it to him. Recalling to his mind the treacherous character of the fever, and fearful that the energy which the narrator had shown might be owing merely to a temporary excitement, perhaps even to the strengthening of the fever itself; that it might be only the last blaze of the torch ere it was quenched for ever: without reference to the narrative, he said to her, "but what do you wish me to do with this?"

The question recalled her to herself, and the state in which she was, from which her still volatile spirit had wandered. She was silent for a few moments, and then said, with a com-

posed voice, "I have heard that there are places of refuge for such as I have been. Their funds are small, and they cannot receive all who apply for admittance. Will you dispose of the bracelet for one of them? It may be the means to enable some lost sheep to re-enter the fold. Oh! that I could myself seek safety and the oblivion of the world in one of these retreats. But, alas! hope fades from me, the hope that I may be spared for days even of repentance."

"You have, of course, been attended by a doctor?" said Sir Frederick, suddenly, the thought then striking him for the first time.

"No. I thought little of this worthless body, I was filled with despair, with dread. I thought only of my guilt, of a sinful past, of a dreadful future. But now I feel so changed—I would live, but I would only live to repent, to labour. I feel the ties of life strongly within me, for I would fain make some reparation. And I am relieved, and I am happier than I deserve. O God! if it be thy will, spare me in thy mercy; but, if my days are numbered, and the measure

of my iniquities has made my existence hateful in thy sight, I bow down my spirit, and bless the hand that strikes me."

"I will return to-morrow," said Sir Frederick. "Keep yourself composed. I will immediately send you a doctor and a nurse—I never supposed you had not yet had medical advice and you shall be removed from here, if it can be done with safety."

"God bless you," she murmured; "God bless you. And if my sinful days are now told, and nothing awaits me in this world but the grave, will you, Sir Frederick Courtenay, remember, at least in your charity, one—I may say it on my death bed with no fear of an unhallowed thought—one who, though she knew it not, but only found it out when misery taught it to her, loved you, though her petulance, and pride, and vanity hid her true feelings from her wilful heart, but who to her shame, confesses that she was utterly unworthy of you."

"Oh! say no more."

"One word more. When death shall have

closed these weary eyes, will you lay me where the passers by may sometimes say ‘God rest her soul?’ And yet, I would not have my name to meet their gaze, it had better be forgotten for ever.”

“I will, I will.”

“Yet one request. Will you, Sir Frederick Courtenay, yourself commit this body to the grave, will you say the last prayer over me?”

“I will; I promise it,” said Sir Frederick, now completely overcome. “I cannot, I cannot stay. God bless you.”

“Farewell.”

They had parted, never to meet again,—those two who in the freshness of their life’s morning had wilfully crushed the flowers of their innocent hopes and joys, and after years of severance had met once more—but green leaves, rosy petals, full stems all had become withered, crumbled, scathed remnants.

Once again that mean low chamber was silent and dark. Beatrice Werther (I will call her by no other name) had sunk back on her wretched

bed, and though exhausted and bewildered with what had passed, she felt sustained with a kind of supernatural strength, and even in that room she was comparatively happy. Death had lost its terrors, for hope had thrust out despair, and the gates of another world, dark and doubtful, seemed to open before her; there was yet a lamp in the distance—the lamp of hope—whose tiny light was a beacon to the wanderer.

In her confused mind, to her troubled perceptions, the presence of Divine hope seemed confounded with a real material light, and as she lay with her overstrained eyes fast closed, she appeared to be passing along a dark and narrow way, keeping her gaze fixed on the twinkling star before her, till the very constancy and persistency of the effort overcame all her faculties, and she sank into a stupor or dull deep sleep.

CHAPTER XIV.

"La voilà cette heure suivie
Par l'autre de l'éternité."

LAMARTINE.

SIR Frederick Courtenay's knees trembled when he rose from the chair on which he had so long sat, and his whole frame tottered as he groped his way to the door of Beatrice's room by the flickering light of the coarse almost burnt out candle, and down the narrow dirty staircase.

There was no one stirring as yet but Courtenay stopped and lingered awhile before leaving the house, for he wished to announce that a nurse and doctor would be sent. But there was no

sound whatever: 'the close stifling noisome atmosphere made him feel faint and choking and he sought to open the house door to let in some pure air.

The noise he made in trying to unbolt the door roused the old woman, and she presently thrust her head out of her room, exclaiming as she held up a light, "Lor! are you only going now? I thought you had gone away this hour and more."

"I have left that poor creature up-stairs very ill," said Sir Frederick; "she requires great attention."

"I don't know how she's to get it here," was the reply, "My Sally can't wait on the lodgers, for nothing at least."

"I shall send a doctor immediately, and a nurse to-morrow morning, and, if possible, have her removed."

"She'll owe a night's lodging though," croaked the hag.

"You shall be paid for it. Will you attend to her till morning?"

“Well I don’t mind doing so, if I should hear her call.”

“You shall not be troubled with her long; she shall be removed, if possible,” repeated Sir Frederick; at the same time giving the woman some money, and preparing to depart.

“Will you shut the door after you? I’ll bolt it when you’re gone,” said the old woman in words and tone which Sir Frederick’s donation had made a good deal more civil. “Turn the key; it’s locked as well as bolted,” she added, watching Courtenay’s ineffectual attempts to open the door, “it’s a little hard to turn for the rust—that’s all the better—there—”

The air from without struck cold and chill on Courtenay, when, at last he succeeded in opening the door. A shivering ran throughout his frame, but his head was burning hot and ached with a heavy pain.

He drew his cloak more closely round him and hastened along the lane; but he turned out of his direct way homewards, and stopped at the door of a physician he was acquainted with, and he

wrote on a piece of paper the direction of the house from which he had just come (the letters were ill-formed and indistinct, he could not make them plain, his hand trembled so much), and an earnest request, as a personal favour, that the medical man would lose no time in visiting a female who was lying there ill.

Then, with slower steps, he resumed his walk homewards.

The first dim struggling light of the November morning was appearing, and, besides the wearied policeman about to be relieved from his cold watch, but a few early risers were afoot, as Sir Frederick Courtenay reached the door of his house.

He shivered as he unbuttoned his coat to take the latch key from his pocket, and again as he applied it to open the door, and his own attention was drawn to the cold, blanched, contracted appearance of his thin hand.

Silently and thoughtfully, he ascended the staircase, and again entered his sitting room.

As he threw his coat on the chair, he cast

another look at the black embers he had in vain striven to enkindle some hours before, for though there seemed to be a fever in his bosom, he felt his limbs and whole frame chilled with more than natural cold.

He took up the portfolio on the table, and opened it. There was the letter which he had so hastily concluded. He sat down, and added to it the following lines:—

“ Six o'clock.

“ I have this moment returned from the fever call. Will you believe me when I tell you that it was a summons to the bed—the death-bed—possibly—of Beatrice Werther?

“ She was lying in a wretched, horrid, lodging-house—worse than wretched; no doctor was beside her, no nurse, and yet I know not if she can be removed.

“ Gracious Heaven! what have I seen and endured since I sat here writing a few hours since.

“ Will you, Harry, can you come to me? You were never more wanted. I am ill, very ill; I

know it. My brain reels; it seems changed to a weight of molten lead.

“Hark ! the bell. What, again ? Oh ! my boy. She grasps him.

“Stop. Oh !——”

There was a dull, heavy sound afterwards remembered to have been heard by one of the servants who was getting up, and was about to answer the night bell.

She went to the door to receive the message, and then, as it proved to be a summons similar to the last, she knocked at Sir Frederick’s bedroom door to call him. As she received no answer, she entered it, but not finding him there, she went into his sitting-room, and, with horror, discovered him lying senseless on the ground.

The house was roused, and he was carried to his bed.

The letter lay open on the table, and the ink was scarcely dry in the pen that had fallen beside him. The confused and almost illegible characters of the writing, and the incongruous words of the last line in the letter on the table,

suggested the probability of a fit having come upon him whilst he was thus occupied.

The request to his friend to come and see him was perceived, and the letter was immediately despatched, with the addition of a few lines, conveying the intelligence of Sir Frederick's alarming seizure.

By the earliest train that started after the receipt of the letter, Montague left London.

When he arrived he found Sir Frederick Courtenay very ill—in a dangerous fever—sick almost to death.

He was conscious, and his first words to his friend, were that the dying Beatrice Werther should be cared for, and be removed from the loathsome lodging house; but the fever rose higher, and strengthened its hold upon him.

Great God of retribution! even in this world, Thy justice has been vindicated,—for the atmosphere of that dying woman's chamber was loaded with pestilence, and as he, whom a strange agency brought to her bedside, had formerly blasted her soul, so has her breath now conveyed contagion

to his body. The fatal bolt has been shot. Death has launched his shaft even from her lips.

Once more, it was Montague's daily and nightly office to sit beside the couch of his stricken friend—this time, alas! with even less hope than before—and once more to witness the convulsions of his fevered limbs, and hear the wild wanderings of his over-wrought brain in the frenzy of its delirium.

But his tender, yet painful ministration, was not required for long.

Ere the first tardy light of the November sun had thrice since Montague's arrival, visited that sad chamber, where lied the wasted remnant of as noble a frame as ever held an immortal spirit, and had announced to the patient loving observer of that enfeebled frame and ebbing spirit that the weary watch of the long dark hours was over, the sacrifice was completed, the holocaust that was offered for acceptance in the silent solemn night, before the dimly lighted altar of the College Church, had been received—retribution was no longer demanded.

A few days only had passed since the termination of the Octave of that high festival which has twice formed an epoch of interest and importance in this tale, when there was a solemn dirge within that Church, beside whose fluted column the guilty shame-stricken woman had sunk down in the attitude—though she had not then felt the repentance—of the dying Magdalen.

Its gorgeous altar and pierced walls were hung with black drapery, and priests with white surplices but black stoles, raised up their voices and chaunted, with mournful tone, the office of the dead; and the mingled expressions of fear, of hope, of supplication, of sorrow, and of joy, forming this magnificent and touching service, were echoed through the lofty edifice on a calm November evening.

Again has been opened the vault below the aisle of the church at Lowick, dedicated to the tombs and monuments of the Courtenays.

Near the coffin, in which reposed the remains of Sir Dugald Courtenay, who descended into that last resting place of his ancestors, full of

years and honour, was placed that of his son. On the outside of it was fastened a silver cross, beneath which was a plate, on which was inscribed a brief recital of the earthly rank of the corpse which it contained, the corpse of one who had little more than passed the prime of life. Within had been placed a chalice, the emblem of the sacred dignity and office of the martyred priest.

In that dark vault there was another coffin which it had received not many years before, close to it, even side by side Sir Frederick's remains rested: and thus, in death, the husband and wife were re-united.

There was no child to follow to the grave him who nevertheless had been a father.

The long unbroken line of the Courtenays of Lowick was severed; but a not unworthy inheritor of their broad lands filled the place of a child-mourner; and, faithful as had ever been Montague's love for his friend in life, so now, as he stood in that solemn aisle, and looked his last farewell down into the dark vault, warm welled

the tears from the deep spring of his heart's affection, and fervent were the supplications which he poured forth over his dead friend's tomb for his "eternal rest."

There is, in the suburbs of a large town, an institution, of which the object, as it was in those who founded, is also in those who conduct it, to provide a refuge for such as have escaped from "the snare of the fowler,"—the reclamation of the lost ones of society, the restoring of female virtue.

Among those who, in dresses of serge, watch with a mother's care, over these children of regeneration, are some of England's fairest daughters, of gentle, even noble blood.

Among those who have assumed the garb of penitence, and in that sanctuary have found again the peace and hope which they had forfeited, there is one, whose dark, commanding features attract the eye of the visitor, as indicating the remains of surpassing beauty. She

is known by no other appellation than that of Mary Magdalen, and but one in the house is acquainted with her real name and history, and is aware that she was once called '*La Belle Indienne*'

We have traced to the close the career of two of the three truant boys—the first incident of whose companionship the opening chapter of this book narrated. Dark and chequered has been that of both—like many a day in our changing, fitful climate; their sun has gone down early, and there is one only survivor to whom their memory is confided.

Of one, the remembrance brings, alas! no grateful association—let it pass.

Precious, yet melancholy, is that of the other, and, like a treasure in a costly casket, it remains closely and lovingly guarded in Montague's inmost heart, and in that too of his gentle wife.

We will not further watch the progress of these two, as, hand-in-hand they pass along life's way.

We leave them happy, happy in the fullest sense that love, and health, and the choicest blessings of Heaven can make them.

And yet, sorrow, like the rustling gale, comes over their souls, at times. Harry Montague's heart has whispered Fingal's words, "My soul feels a want in our joy, I behold a breach among my friends." That breach cannot be filled, although a holy, bright, and constant love has never ceased to shed its beams upon his spirit, and to light his onward path—the love of his fond and tender Mary,

A guardian angel o'er his life presiding
Doubling his pleasures, and his cares dividing;
Winning him back, when mingling in the throng.
Back from a world we love, alas! too long.

CONCLUSION.

READER, our task is ended. With me, it has been a labour of love; yours, I hope, has not been wholly without interest or pleasure.

Yet, mid those idle hours which the perusal of this tale—the looking over of these “pen-and-ink sketches”—has served to wile away, I would fain hope to have mingled something of the “utile” with the “dulce,” something not unworthy to be remembered, not merely as the ingenious fabric of a story,—the party-coloured web that fancy has woven,—but as the reality of sober truth; and I shall not deem my labour vain, if, as you lay these volumes by, perhaps no more to be opened, the warning conviction within you is strengthened that the fortune of a young man’s career in life are often determined by the circumstances and friendships of his early and heedless years; that

although this life is but a part of a dimly known Eternal system, there are throughout it "links," though often "hidden," of a mysterious and wonderful causation; that, even in this world of imperfect justice, "the things that we sow, those also we shall reap," and that there is little chance of crime escaping, sooner or later, an exact and severe retribution.

And now, gentle reader, fare thee well.

Health and the quiet of a healthful mind
Attend thee:

And to make my valediction yet more complete, and in return for thy kind indulgence towards thy humble tale teller, accept in addition the wishes contained in the lines that Pope addressed to his fair favorite upon her birth-day, of which I write but the two first lines in token of the prayers contained in all,—

Oh! be thou bless'd with all that heaven can send,
Long health, long youth, long pleasure, and a friend.

THE END.





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